JIHAD
in the West

The Rise of
Militant Salafism

Frazer Egerton

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Jihad in the West

Militant Salafism is one of the most significant movements in politics today. Unfortunately its significance has not been matched by understanding. To begin to address this knowledge deficit this book argues that, rather than the largely unhelpful pursuit of individual 'root causes' offered in much of the literature, we would be better served by looking at the factors that have enabled and facilitated a particular political imaginary. That political imaginary is one that allows individuals to conceive of themselves as integral members of a global battle waged between the forces of Islam and the West, something that lies at the heart of militant Salafism. Frazer Egerton shows how the ubiquity of modern media and the prevalence of movement have allowed for a transformation of existing beliefs into an ideology supportive of militant Salafism against the West amongst Western Muslims.

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Jihad in the West: The Rise of Militant Salafism

FRAZER EGERTON

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Introduction

This book is concerned with Western militant Salafism. It is not alone. Terrorism, and particularly this form, is currently the subject *du jour* in a discipline where few phenomena capture the public imagination for a sustained period. Spurred particularly by the 2001 attacks on the United States, heightened by further killings in Madrid, London and Amsterdam, and fuelled by frequent stories of numerous other threats planned or prevented, militant Salafism has become one of the most prominent and controversial issues in contemporary politics. Yet despite, or perhaps because of, the significance attached to this topic, disagreements continue to rage over such matters as the role of religion, political grievances, levels of social integration and the extent and nature of the threat posed by this form of terrorism. Indeed, even the foremost analysts in the field cannot agree on the most basic elements of militant Salafism and the threat it offers. As *The New York Times* recently noted, a bitter

struggle between two powerful figures in the world of terrorism has broken out, forcing their followers to choose sides. This battle is not being fought in the rugged no man's land on the Pakistan-Afghan border. It is a contest reverberating inside the Beltway between two of America's leading theorists on terrorism and how to fight it, two men who hold opposing views on the very nature of the threat.[1]

For his part, Marc Sageman claims that militant Salafism is now devoid of an overarching, hierarchical structure. He argues that al-Qaeda is little more than an idea and that there remains little of al-Qaeda that might be recognisable as a functioning organisation capable of attacking the United States.[2] Al-Qaeda has been replaced

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[1] Cited in E. Sciolino and E. Schmitt, 'A Not Very Private Feud over Terrorism', *New York Times*, 8 June 2008.

[2] This point was also made some time ago by Jason Burke; see J. Burke, *Al-Qaeda: The True Story of Radical Islam*. London: Penguin, 2003.

with self-organising, independently directed groups that take their inspiration but no directive from the likes of Osama bin Laden.[3] Bruce Hoffman disagrees. He approvingly cites a recent Senate Select Committee on Intelligence report that claimed al-Qaeda 'is and will remain the most serious threat to the Homeland, as its central leadership continues to plan high-impact plots, while pushing others in extremist Sunni communities to mimic its efforts and to supplement its capabilities'.[4] For Hoffman, al-Qaeda constitutes a real and present danger as it directs attacks against the United States and other targets throughout the world. Such debates matter greatly, helping to dictate where very considerable resources and efforts might best be dedicated. Policies will be decided, resources diverted and ultimately lives lost or saved on the basis of understandings of militant Salafism and how those understandings are in turn acted upon. As Sciolino and Schmitt note in the case of the United States and the Sageman/Hoffman debate, 'Officials from the White House to the C.I.A. acknowledge the importance of the debate of the two men as the government assesses the nature of the threat. Looking forward, it is certain to be used to win bureaucratic turf wars over what programs will be emphasized in the next administration.'[5]

Indeed Sciolino and Schmitt's judgement on one of many debates between two of the numerous figures in the field is to understate the significance of efforts to shed light on militant Salafism. The phenomenon is a genuinely significant one with consequences that are far greater than the bureaucratic politics of any one country. Wars have been fought, atrocities committed and lives ruined in the name of promulgating and preventing a particular, violent, interpretation of Islam. As long as militant Salafism continues, people will be seriously and adversely affected – whether through the militancy itself, measures aimed at countering it, or the more routine corrosion of relations in and between communities. As such, an understanding of militant Salafism is of real and pressing importance. Unfortunately, as the debate noted above indicates, the level of public, academic and political interest has not heralded a concomitant level of understanding.

[3] See M. Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007.

[4] B. Hoffman, 'The Myth of Grass-Roots Terrorism: Why Osama Bin Laden Still Matters', *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2007.

[5] Sciolino and Schmitt, 'A Not Very Private Feud over Terrorism'.

How then are we to understand this phenomenon? The first stage is to detail what it actually is. This might appear straightforward enough, and yet so much has been written which unnecessarily conflates, deliberately obfuscates and unwittingly confuses, that in fact this is all too rarely the case. The second stage is to understand how and hopefully why this phenomenon is occurring. Theory plays a key role here, or at least it should. However, along with clarity and precision, it too is all too often conspicuously absent. It is not that theory must be an unduly laboured approach, a Ph.D. thesis writ large (inaccessible theories applied to obscure topics). There is, though, a real need for insightful theorising in the study of militant Salafism, something to make meaningful sense of that data which exists and point to that which is required. Thankfully, there are several theories that offer real potential in shedding much-needed light on this phenomenon. The problem is not their existence, but a failure to apply them.

This book is an effort to offer a clear and informed exploration of militant Salafism, one framed by a relevant and revealing theoretical approach and supported by an appropriate level of empirical evidence. To do so, the first chapter outlines what militant Salafism actually is. It details the particular militant identification, the metanarrative according to which militant Salafists act. Two factors are of primary importance, both of which are detailed: political grievances and religious interpretation. Chapter 2 then examines one of the main approaches purporting to explain the phenomenon – alienation. This very popular approach argues that militancy is best understood as being a response to some (often unspecified) notion of alienation. Despite the dominance of this approach in the study of militant Salafism in the West, it brings with it substantive problems that should provoke questions as to whether its popularity is merited. Thankfully, there are preferable alternatives, one of which is detailed in Chapter 3. It is an approach that borrows liberally from some theorists whose ideas and observations have been very usefully applied in other contexts but, to the detriment of the field, not in any sustained way to militant Salafism. Central to this approach is the notion of the political imaginary. That it has been applied only rarely and in little detail to this topic is somewhat curious, given its centrality in the transformation of Western militants. For the majority of them, the growth of their militancy was a dramatic departure from their previous beliefs,

occurred over a short period of time, and was made with only a tangential relationship with those people and events around the world that they would claim motivated them. The leap from non-militant Westerner to militant Salafist is made possible by the exercise of the political imagination which produces an imagined world of *ummah*[6] versus West. Thus to understand how (and therefore something as to why) this may be happening, we must turn our enquiry and focus our analysis on the political imaginary, an increasingly important aspect of political life in the production of what is collectively imagined rather than lived. It is the essential foundation of imagined worlds where commonalities are posited and affinity expressed amongst and between people who may never meet, and for whom some supposed shared social facts assume a significance that is as socially constructed as others that are ignored. Militant Salafism is built on just such a construction.

If the political imaginary is important, so too are those forces that give rise to it. Accordingly, this book affords a chapter to each of the forces upon which the militant Salafist imaginary depends most – media and movement. These conditions of possibility permit the production of the militant Salafist worldview, the metanarrative of innate and sustained Western hostility waged against Islam and its practitioners, and the notion that it is religiously mandated to respond with force. Each chapter explores the way in which those two forces exert their effect on militant Salafism and offers empirical evidence as to how it does so. Thus Chapter 4 details the use and importance of hypermedia in the lives of militant individuals and groups and an analysis of its impact on the militants surveyed. Within this the role of images – depictions of beheadings and explosions, of dead bodies and willing martyrs – is of crucial significance. Images permit a degree of ascription of meaning on the part of the consumer that other forms of media cannot match. As a result, distant viewers are able to accommodate these events within a particular narrative and then project themselves into that narrative as an active participant. Those images play a significant role in allowing disconnected people to imagine themselves united with one another and involved in the same global struggle. Chapter 5 then discusses the extensive movement in the lives

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[6] *Ummah* (derived from *umm*, meaning mother) is the Arabic word for community. It is used to denote the worldwide community of the faithful.

of militant Salafists in the West – including a database of 250 Western militants – and the consequences it heralds in facilitating particular identities. In a more static environment, social life will be informed and reflective of highly local activity. Movement releases constraints on the way in which people may imagine themselves politically.[7] It is certainly of crucial importance to the militant Salafist political reimagining of a global community of which they are a part. Finally, Chapter 6 offers an explanation as to why, when it comes to militant Salafism, the effect of global forces experienced by almost everyone has a transformative effect on a very small section of society. In large part the answer is that whilst the militant narrative is taken to an extreme in militant Salafists, elements of it are present, albeit in a more nuanced and non-militant form, in many Muslim communities in the West. Militant Salafism taps into a narrative of religious unity and Western hostility to Islam. It builds upon existing notions and beliefs that are then taken, reformulated and amplified by militants. This process is ably assisted by two intermediaries of particular importance – radical preachers and small groups cut off from wider society.

However, before turning to these chapters, a little more is required as to the choice of subject and the terminology employed in trying to better understand it.

Language

There is a multitude of terms in the literature used in place of what is here called militant Salafists/ism, and so this particular choice should briefly be explained. Militant is largely uncontroversial, denoting the use of violence. The designation Salafist/ism requires a little more explanation. Salafism is derived from the Arabic for predecessor or ancestor. It is a literalist interpretation within Sunni Islam that holds

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[7] A number of writers have written on this topic. Amongst the best are:
A. Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity, 1991;
D. Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. London: Blackwell, 1991; D. Harvey, 'From Space to Place and Back Again: Reflections on the Condition of Postmodernity', in J. Bird (ed.), *Mapping the Futures: Local Culture, Global Change*. London: Routledge, 1993; and J. Scholte, 'The Geography of Collective Identities in a Globalizing World', *The Review of International Political Economy* 73(3) 1996.

that innovation from the Islam practised by the prophet Mohammed and his contemporary followers is a deviation from Islam. As should be clear from that description, in no way is Salafism synonymous with militancy. Prefacing it with the word militant therefore differentiates the militants being studied here from their pious counterparts. The considerable advantage of this term, one that more than compensates for its admitted awkwardness, is that it largely avoids the all too common reification and artificial amalgamation of a diverse set of incidents.

Why militant Salafism in the West?

This particular work is concerned only with militant Salafism in the West. As such, it examines only those either born or who have lived for a considerable time in the West. Whilst very much a minority ideological movement within Islamism, itself a subset of Islam, as with all religious sects, militant Salafism is nonetheless far from a mono-lithic movement. Whilst there are similarities in the ideology and aims of geographically diverse groups who might consider themselves (or be considered by others) to be militant Salafists, there are also substantial and significant differences between them. Similarly the story of those born and raised in Western urbanity is quite different from those who may have personally endured the horrors of desperate poverty or conflict, or extreme religious indoctrination elsewhere. These alternative contexts and ideologies risk being ignored if a study of militant Salafism offers no geographical differentiation. There is therefore good reason for placing limits on any study examining militant Salafism – in this case, to look only at its manifestation in the West. A broader remit would have to substitute nuance and preci-sion for generalities, and it is unclear that such a trade-off is a sensible one. As an example of the result of restricting the scope of the study in this way, of those who directly attacked the United States in 2001, only Mohammed Atta, Ziad Jarrah and Marwan al-Shehhi, those who earlier lived in Hamburg and Hani Hanjour who lived in the United States are included here. Others who lived in the West and who sought to be a part of the attacks, or who offered assistance to those who were, are also included, men such as Said Bahaji, Ramzi bin al Shibh and Mohammed Zammar. However, those who flew from the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia to join their accomplices in

the attacks are not. Looking at Western militants, and being explicit in doing so, produces an examination of similar cases rather than conflating those whose methods may mask considerable differences. On the other hand, it did not make sense to limit the survey to those who attacked targets in the West. There are many examples of individuals who have launched attacks in the West and who had previously considered and even attempted attacks elsewhere. The reverse of this is also true – militants have attacked other parts of the world, having previously planned attacks in the West. Thus for example some of the men who fled Spain having bombed a train station in Madrid made their way to Iraq to fight with insurgent forces there;[8] a videotape of the leader of the cell that attacked the London transport system in 2005 showed him bidding farewell to his young daughter before travelling to fight in Afghanistan. He apparently did not make it further than Pakistan and returned a few months later when he began to plan the London attack;[9] and members of cells in both Germany and the Netherlands sought to fight in numerous other arenas before ultimately attacking the United States and the Netherlands respectively.[10] For these and many other militants, jihad might have been waged in Chechnya, Iraq, Paris or Los Angeles. It is the target and the cause, rather than geographical location, that is of significance. This is reflected in the choice of who is included in this study. On the other hand, those who participated in conflicts in what might be called defensive jihad, military action to repel an invading force, have been excluded. Whilst there is considerable overlap between support for jihad against Americans in Iraq and against Americans in the United States, this is not always the case. To have included those committed only to the former would have muddied the focus unduly.

Now the use of language is clear, the task is to bring a similar clarity to that to which the language is being applied: what is a militant Salafist?

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[8] R. Cowan *et al.*, 'Bus Bomb Clues May Hold Key to Terror Attack', *The Guardian*, 11 July 2005.

[9] H. Siddique, '"Take Care of Mummy", July 7 Ringleader Told Daughter', *The Guardian*, 24 April 2008.

[10] A. Benschop, 'Chronicle of a Political Murder Foretold', 2004, available at www.sociosite.org/jihad_nl_en.php, and T. McDermott, *Perfect Soldiers. The 9/11 Hijackers: Who They Were, Why They Did It*. New York: Harper, 2005.

1 | *Mad mullah or freedom fighter? What is a militant Salafist?*

If we are to begin to effectively study militant Salafism, we must first establish precisely what it actually is. Militant Salafism cannot be like pornography – allegedly recognisable but indefinable. Rendering the task here considerably easier is the willingness amongst militants themselves to offer explanations as to whom and why they are fighting, explanations that go a long way in explaining what militant Salafism is.

There are two main elements that are of crucial importance in explaining militant Salafism – the religious and the political. Each is explored below. Both are very important elements of militant Salafism, but they do not by themselves explain this particular militancy. There is a tendency amongst too many writing in this field to either dismiss the claims made by militant Salafists or uncritically regurgitate them. Their explanations should be taken seriously, but they also need to be placed in an appropriate context, specifically the particular metanarrative of what it means to be a Muslim.

Politics and its politicisation

Many of the more experienced and accomplished observers of Salafist militancy draw attention to its political metanarrative of Muslim suffering, the persecution of the *ummah*. Jason Burke, for example, argues that 'Islamic militants' main objective is not conquest, but to beat back what they perceive as an aggressive West that is supposedly trying to complete the project begun during the Crusades and colonial periods of denigrating, dividing, and humiliating Islam'.[1] They perceive a global conflict, one in which they feel compelled to participate. As Wiktorowicz and Kaltner write, militant Salafism is therefore best understood as:

[1] Burke, 'Think Again: Al Qaeda', p. 18.

defensive measures to protect the Muslim community from outside aggressions and crimes against Islam: support for Israel against the Palestinians; support for Serbian genocide against Bosnian Muslims; support for India against the Kashmiris; the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan; actions in East Timor; support for Philippine aggression against Muslims in the south.[2]

The most (in)famous of militant Salafists, Osama bin Laden, accepts that such a list of grievances is valid, that a war is being waged by the West against the Muslim world. In one interview he articulated his belief that 'Our [the Muslims'] enemy is the crusader alliance led by America, Britain and Israel . . . Our hostility is in the first place, and to the greatest extent, levelled against these world infidels, and by necessity the regimes which have turned themselves into tools for this occupation'.[3]

Other militants concur that violent jihad is a legitimate response to aggression currently directed against Muslims. Richard Reid sought to blow up an airliner flying between Paris and Miami in late 2001. After his arrest and conviction, Reid argued in a letter that he made

no apologies for my activities nor those of my associates and I state that if people want the attacks on the West to stop then they should start looking to their own selves because as far as we're concerned whoever supports the American government's activities in the Muslim world or helps them in that by any means is equally responsible for those acts and thus such people have no one but their own selves to blame for the attacks on American interests and such attacks will not be stopped unless the Americans stop their oppression of the Muslims.[4]

Mohammed Siddique Khan has been characterised as the lead bomber in the 2005 attacks on the London transport system that killed 52 people and injured many more. He expressed similar sentiments to those above in justifying the killing of civilians. In a video released shortly after the attacks he explained:

Your democratically elected governments continuously perpetuate atrocities against my people all over the world. And your support of them makes you directly responsible, just as I am directly responsible for protecting and

2 Q. Wiktorowicz and J. Kaltner, 'Killing in the Name of Islam: Al-Qaeda's Justification for September 11', *Middle East Policy Council* 10(2), 2003, pp. 84–5.
3 Interview with Osama bin Laden, cited in R. Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism.* New York: Random House, 2005, p. 120.
4 N. Young, 'Understanding Insanity,' *The Firm*, December 2007.

avenging my Muslim brothers and sisters . . . Until we feel security, you will be our targets. And until you stop the bombing, gassing, imprisonment and torture of my people we will not stop this fight . . . Now you too will taste the reality of this situation.[5]

A Pakistani cousin of one of Khan's accomplices, Shehzad Tanweer, describes him as similarly motivated by the plight of co-religionists: 'Whenever he would listen about sufferings of Muslims he would become very emotional and sentimental . . . He was a good Muslim . . . he also wished to take part in jihad and lay down his life. He knew that excesses are being done to Muslims.'[6] Tanweer also featured in a video. This was released a year after the attacks and featured both the Egyptian Ayman al-Zawahiri and the US-born Adam Gadahn. In it, Tanweer offered the following message:

To the non-Muslims of Britain, you may wonder what you have done to deserve this. You are those who have voted in your government, who in turn have, and still continue to this day, continue to oppress our mothers, children, brothers and sisters, from the east to the west, in Palestine, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Chechnya. Your government has openly supported the genocide of over 150,000 innocent Muslims in Falluja . . . You have offered financial and military support to the U.S. and Israel, in the massacre of our children in Palestine. You are directly responsible for the problems in Palestine, Afghanistan, and Iraq to this day. You have openly declared war on Islam, and are the forerunners in the crusade against the Muslims . . . What you have witnessed now is only the beginning of a series of attacks, which, *inshallah*, will intensify and continue, until you pull all your troops out of Afghanistan and Iraq, until you stop all financial and military support to the U.S. and Israel, and until you release all Muslim prisoners from Belmarsh, and your other concentration camps. And know that if you fail to comply with this, then know that this war will never stop, and that we are ready to give our lives, one hundred times over, for the cause of Islam. You will never experience peace, until our children in Palestine, our mothers and sisters in Kashmir, and our brothers in Afghanistan and Iraq feel peace.[7]

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[5] BBC, 'London Bomber: Text in Full', *BBC News Website*, 1 September 2005.

[6] D. McGrory and Z. Hussain, 'Cousin Listened to Boasts About Suicide Mission', *The Times*, 22 July 2005.

[7] MEMRI, 'Al-Qaeda Film on the First Anniversary of the London Bombings Features Messages by Bomber Shehzad Tanweer, American Al-Qaeda Member Adam Gadan and Al-Qaeda Leader Ayman Al-Zawahiri', *MEMRI TV monitor unit*, 8 July 2006, available at www.memritv.org/clip/en/1186.htm.

Al-Zawahiri added that 'What made Shehzad join the camps of Qaeda Al-Jihad was the oppression carried out by the British in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Palestine. He would often talk about Palestine, about the British support of the Jews, and about their clear injustice against the Muslims.'[8] In similar terms, Gadahn noted:

It's crucial for Muslims to keep in mind that the Americans, the British, and the other members of the coalition of terror have intentionally targeted Muslim civilians and civilian targets, both before, as well as after September 11th. In both the first and second Iraq wars, as well as in their forays into Somalia, the Sudan, and Afghanistan, just to give you a few examples . . . They have targeted civilians for assassination and kidnapping. They kidnapped any non-Afghans they found, and shipped them off to Guantanamo or worse. Many were handed over to the American- and British-backed despotic regimes of the Islamic world, to be brutally interrogated. And with the blessing and support of that notorious Afghan-killer Hamid Karzai, they've murdered thousands of Afghan civilians as they slept in their beds, travelled on the roads, attended weddings, and prayed at the mosques. I know they've killed and maimed civilians in their strikes because I've seen it with my own eyes. My brothers have seen it. I've carried the victims in my arms, women, children, toddlers, babies in their mothers' wombs. You name it, they've probably bombed it. I could go on and on – and that's just Afghanistan. We haven't talked about American and British atrocities in the two Iraq wars.[9]

In 2004, Mohammed Bouyeri murdered the Dutch writer and director Theo van Gogh. Van Gogh was a descendant of the brother of the artist Vincent van Gogh, as well as a prominent writer and film-maker in his own right. Bouyeri first shot van Gogh on a busy Amsterdam street and then tried to behead him with a knife. As the militancy which culminated in this murder had developed, Bouyeri wrote a great deal on the Internet. One of his pieces is instructive in its concern for the disadvantageous position of the global Islamic community relative to its past glories, something for which he held the unIslamic practices of its leaders and the hostility of the West responsible. In March 2004 he wrote a piece called 'To catch a wolf' which recounted one method with which Inuits apparently hunt. First, we are told, they rub the knife with animal blood before freezing it. This is repeated until the knife is entirely covered with frozen blood. It is then stuck in the snow.

[8] *Ibid*.   [9] *Ibid*.

A wolf will smell the blood and lick it from the knife. Its desire for blood overrides the pain from cutting its own tongue as it does so. Eventually the wolf bleeds to death. For Bouyeri, the wolf represented the *ummah*. He argued that since the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the caliphate with it, the enemies of Islam have engaged in a project to destroy Islam. As a result of the hostility of the West and the weakness of too many Muslims, the *ummah* that was once so powerful is now 'a dead drunk frustrated nation, begging for a piece of bread at the pavement of the West'.[10]

For militant Salafists, 'the suffering and humiliation of Muslims around the world are not unconnected episodes, but a chain in a series of transgressions by the "Crusader–Zionist" alliance against Islam and Muslims'.[11] That aggression is alleged to continue around the world today. As such, as the Jordanian Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who headed the militant Salafist efforts in Iraq before his death, argued: 'Our Jihad in Iraq is the same as in Afghanistan, Kashmir, Chechnya, and Bosnia.'[12] In response, true Muslims are called upon to defend fellow Muslims. As Ramzi bin al Shibh, a member of the Hamburg cell who sought to participate in the attacks that group made on the United States in 2001, sermonised, 'The problem of Jerusalem is the problem of the [Muslim] nation. That's also the problem of every Muslim everywhere. Whenever possible and during each jihad a Muslim has to remind his comrades about that. He has to remind him of the problem of the nation, the beloved nation.'[13]

That jihad in defence of global co-religionists dominates the thoughts and words of militant Salafists is apparent from an examination of the numerous websites established for this constituency, by listening to recordings of sermons given by radical preachers, or watching the justifications offered in videos recorded by militant Salafists. It is also summarised anecdotally by Mohamed Sifaoui, an Algerian journalist who spent several months in a militant milieu as part of an assignment. He described the priorities and concerns of

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[10] Cited in Benschop, 'Chronicle of a Political Murder Foretold'.

[11] M. Hafez, 'Martyrdom Mythology in Iraq: How Jihadists Frame Suicide Terrorism in Videos and Biographies', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19 2007, p. 100.

[12] From a montage entitled 'And Worship Shall be Only for Allah' issued in June 2005, cited in Hafez, 'Martyrdom Mythology in Iraq'.

[13] Cited in McDermott, *Perfect Soldiers*, p. 82.

Karim Bourti, a militant whose trust and confidence he had earned: 'Karim led the prayers. Before he began, he asked all the faithful to make invocations for "the victory of the brother mudjahidins".[14] In every act, he made sure he mentioned the "holy war". I noticed that throughout the period I was in touch with him, his whole life was centred on this question.'[15]

However, this does not mean that militant Salafism is solely an unmediated response to Western foreign policy, despite such an approach enjoying a certain currency. Such forays into the mists (and myths) of time are certainly significant, but to accept them entirely is to misunderstand the nature of the construction of identity. The relevance of politics here is not in the reaction of Muslims to grievances, but in the framing of the world and the events in it as a battleground between two diametrically opposed forces. Militant Salafism cannot be explained only in the roll-call of allegedly unjustified military involvement overseas – an intuitively attractive argument, but not one that withstands more careful scrutiny. There are four main reasons for this.

First, whilst there are many terrible circumstances endured by Muslims, victims of deprivation and despotism, and whilst non-Muslims are sometimes culpable, such culpability falls considerably short of militant claims. For that, three additional steps must be taken. First, one has to ignore, trivialise or justify aggression committed by Muslims. Second, there must be an exclusive focus on a relatively small number of conflicts where Muslims are the victims. Third, the complexity of individual situations and the diversity of explanations for different situations must be reduced to a simplistic and constant attribution of blame on Western policy and people. This is possible because for militant Salafists it is not individual events that are important, but rather the metanarrative of Muslim suffering through which all events are seen. Marshalling partial truths and some legitimate grievances, militant Salafists assume for all Muslims the role of victims, and for all non-Muslims the role of aggressor. Militant Salafism is crude Marxism, with class being replaced with religion in

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[14] From the Arabic meaning strugglers. It has widely assumed a religious and military significance. In this book a mujahideen (as it is usually spelt) is one who wages militant jihad.

[15] M. Sifaoui, *Inside Al Qaeda: How I Infiltrated the World's Deadliest Terrorist Organization*. New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, p. 89.

the explanation as to how the world operates. For militant Salafists, the diverse conflicts in distant parts of the world are given meaning through the discourse of the West attacking Muslims.

Secondly, the concern of militant Salafists for the suffering of fellow Muslims appears of significance only to the extent to which it legitimates a violent response. Otherwise, if the concern was genuine, one might anticipate militants had made strenuous efforts in the past to improve the lives of those in whose name they claim to be acting, that their militancy represented the last resort. This is very rarely the case. Precious few militant Salafists engage in efforts to help their co-religionists by working with genuinely humanitarian projects (those that do not include jihad). For example, many militants claimed the invasion of Iraq justified a violent response. However, precious few undertook any preventative efforts as it became increasingly clear that an invasion was likely. A few are known about[16] and doubtless there are more who are not, but this is undoubtedly a drop in the militant ocean. The vast majority make a rapid leap from non-involvement in any sort of politics, to the adoption of the militant Salafist metanarrative and the extreme violence it espouses, not engaging on the way in any efforts to alleviate the suffering of the *ummah*.

Thirdly, the chronology of events offers little support for the idea that militancy is enacted in defence of Muslims and Muslim countries. Despite claims to have been motivated primarily by Iraq, two of the London bombers, Mohammed Siddique Khan and Shehzad Tanweer, were amongst those cheering when the planes hit the World Trade Center two years before the US-led invasion.[17] Many of the key architects and members of the Madrid cell were supporters of militant movements in North Africa and Spain, again predating either Afghanistan or Iraq, the alleged motivation for their attacks on the capital's commuters.[18] The idea that the invasion of Iraq had led to their attack is further undermined by a second attempted attack even after it was apparent that the Socialist Party, committed to a quick

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[16] Muktar Ibrahim claimed he and Yassin Omar protested the attack; see BBC News, '21/7 Plan "was Iraq War protest"', *BBC News Website*, 19 March 2007.

[17] E. Vulliamy, 'The IT Man who tried to stop the 7/7 Bombers', *The Guardian*, 24 June 2006.

[18] P. Finn and K. Richburg, 'Madrid Probe turns to Islamic Cell in Morocco', *The Washington Post*, 20 March 2004.

withdrawal of its troops, would be elected to government. When that became clear, the terrorists simply added a new demand. In a similar vein, as Roy notes, Bin Laden 'mentioned the Israeli–Palestinian conflict as justification for the attacks on 11 September, but no longer refers to it'.[19] In fact, of late, he has discovered the political rewards in doing so, but it is very difficult to make the case that it represents a key motivating cause for him. It is not Iraq, Afghanistan or Bosnia that is the motivation for militancy, it is all of them and a whole series of other alleged examples of Western aggression.

That is not to say that the various conflicts so often cited by militants have no effect on militant Salafism – they do. Rather, it is that it is the overarching narrative and not the individual conflicts that is more significant. It is this point that Aaronovitch is making when, in reference to those who advance the idea that military action in Iraq, Afghanistan and Bosnia represents additional chapters in a tale of perpetual hostility, he asks us to:

Note how the 'more recent oppression'[20] is supposed just to be a fact. And we know to whom it refers and to whom it doesn't. The elected Government in Iraq, the Shia majority, the new fact of Kurdish rights in that country, don't count. All these peoples are de-Muslimified for the purposes of victimology. And that happens because they simply don't fit the narrative. The Sunnis of Iraq are imagined to be 'us', but the Shia and the Kurds aren't. The bombed villagers of Afghanistan are 'us', the liberated women aren't. The Kosovan Muslims aren't, either, though you can bet they would have been had Nato not intervened to save them. As it is, they too have disappeared from Muslimhood. This is not some kind of rhetorical point I'm making. It simply is not an accident – in psychological terms – that anything that conflicts with the Grievance is discounted, and anything that contributes to it is emphasised. Consider the narrative of Saddam. There were basically three options. One, do business with him. That equals propping

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[19] O. Roy, 'Britain: Homegrown Terror', *Le Monde Diplomatique*, 5 August 2005. Similarly, Bin Laden and many works on him emphasise the role of US troops in Saudi Arabia in transforming him from local fighter to international militant. In truth, however, as Roy notes, he 'has been an internationalist fighter since the early 1980s and has never concealed his hostility to the West, even when fighting the Soviets in Afghanistan. While he was shocked by the Saudi royal family's appeal to the US in 1991, that changed his attitude to the Saudis (with whom he was previously on good terms), rather than to the US, which he has always hated.'

[20] The words of a journalist he cites, who refers to the Iraq war in these terms.

up un-Islamic tyrants. Two, use sanctions against him. That equals murdering Muslim children. And three, topple him. Ditto plus. All options, bar none, are added to the Grievance.[21]

He is perfectly right. Politics matter to the militant Salafist only if they can be accommodated within a framework of armed conflict between two imagined entities – Islam and 'the West'.

Finally, as one commentator argues, 'it is reductive and finally inadequate to think of terrorist acts as only a political response to political facts, past or present'.[22] In a superb article, Tololyan criticises what he terms 'politicization', a practice to which the discipline of political science and the study of terror appear particularly disposed. He defines this as the effort

to turn enormously complex events into mere, or only, or just, *political* facts that can be seen as motivating other political acts, including terrorism … Whether the causes be genocide, loss of sovereignty or loss of land, when they result in terrorism the model is the same at its core: one set of events, described as political, functions as a 'cause', creating among its victims a set of agents who are motivated either by politics or by pathology to commit another set of acts described as terrorist.[23]

In the case of militant Salafism, such politicisation is the claim that the phenomenon is best understood as a direct military response to the various conflicts – Iraq I and II, Bosnia, Afghanistan etc. They certainly are significant, but that significance is not the result of a direct causal relationship between foreign policy operations and militant Salafist attacks. It is not the individual events, the push and pull of political fact giving rise to political fact, that matter here, but rather the metanarrative of which they are a part. Political events, the catalogue of conflicts that have Muslims enduring the effects of Western foreign policy, are accommodated in this broader understanding of world events.

Atrocities are committed, wars are waged, people killed. Why such horrors ocur is less easy to demonstrate. Alternative explanatory

[21] D. Aaronovitch, 'Nursing a Grievance, Blinded by Narcissism – Such Ordinary Killers', *The Times*, 19 July 2005.

[22] K. Tololyan, 'Cultural Narrative and the Motivation of the Terrorist', in D. Rapaport (ed.), *Inside the Terrorist Organization*. London: Frank Cass, 2001, p. 227.

[23] *Ibid*. p. 219.

discourses are constructed to explain such events.[24] As Purvis and Hunt write, 'earthquakes occur, and their occurrence is independent of consciousness; but it is their construction in discourse that determines whether they are "movements of tectonic plates" or manifestations of "the wrath of the gods"'.[25] Militant Salafism represents one example of this accommodation of facts into an existing discourse. For its exponents, the conflicts in Srebrenica, Iraq, Afghanistan, Sudan and Somalia are given meaning through the discourse of the West attacking Muslims, conceived of as a global community. Accepting that this represents only one way of viewing these various series of events brings us closer to an appreciation of the particular worldview, the discursive construction that forms the foundation of militant Salafism.

Interpreting religion

Relatively few serious analysts point to religion as an explanation for militant Salafism. At first glance this may seem counterintuitive, but given that many who do, offer simplistic and reductive accounts, that reluctance becomes a little more comprehensible. This section seeks to bring religion back in, but to do so in a way that contextualises its importance. As such, what is significant here is not some reified idea of a particular religion, but rather religious culture.

Of course, those who are militant Salafists claim that their action is motivated by the teachings of Islam. They argue that they are living, dying and killing in accordance with religious duty. Siddique Khan, in the video in which he featured, explained:

I and thousands like me are forsaking everything for what we believe. Our driving motivation doesn't come from tangible commodities that this world has to offer... Our religion is Islam – obedience to the one true God, Allah, and following the footsteps of the final prophet and messenger Muhammad... This is how our ethical stances are dictated.[26]

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[24] For useful illustrations of this in the context of the conflict in Bosnia, see L. Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War.* London: Routledge, 2006, and D. Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and Politics of Identity.* Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1992.

[25] T. Purvis and A. Hunt, 'Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology...', *British Journal of Sociology* 44(3) 1993, p. 492.

[26] BBC, 'London Bomber: Text in Full'.

And his co-conspirator Tanweer called on his fellow Britons to heed the call of Allah:

We are 100% committed to the cause of Islam . . . Oh Muslims of Britain . . . Your duty is to Allah, to His messenger, and to those who are weak and oppressed. As Allah says, in *Surat Al-Touba*: 'Oh you who believe, what is the matter with you, that when you are asked to march forth in His cause, you cling heavily to the earth. Are you pleased with the life of this world rather than the Hereafter? But little is the enjoyment of this world as compared to the Hereafter.'[27]

The aforementioned Mohammed Bouyeri claimed at his trial that his actions were the result of an injunction that commanded Muslims to kill those who insult the prophet.[28] A similar religious motivation appeared evident when a letter was shown at the trial of the man who had plotted to simultaneously blow up a transatlantic plane along with Reid. In the letter, Sajiid Badat wrote to his parents that he had 'a sincere desire to sell [his] soul to Allah in return for paradise'.[29] According to the argument made by militants, they do what they do because they are Muslims, and the faith demands the lifestyle and actions they pursue. Militant Salafism is the enactment of an effort to live according to their interpretation of the prescriptions of Islam.

The actions of militant Salafists appear to afford greater credence to such claims, with many examples of men and women determined to go to their death in accordance with a particular interpretation of Islam they have adopted. One mujahideen leader in Afghanistan recalled the experience of fighters who appear to embody just such a desire: 'They fought all day then when I went to relieve them in the evening the Arabs were crying because they wanted to be martyred. They were saying, "I must have committed some sin for Allah has not chosen me to go to heaven." I told them that if they wanted to stay. . . and fight then I wasn't going to stop them. The next day they were killed.'[30]

[27] MEMRI, 'Al-Qaeda Film'.
[28] BBC, 'Van Gogh Suspect Confesses Guilt', *BBC News Website*, 12 July 2005.
[29] V. Dodd, 'Former Grammar School Boy Gets 13 Years for Shoe Bomb Plot', *The Guardian*, 23 April 2005.
[30] Mohammed Din Mohammed, cited in J. Burke, *Al-Qaeda: Casting a Shadow of Terror*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2003, p. 76.

In a similar vein, a journalist and author of a book on militant Salafism recounts how:

Mansoor al-Barakati, a Saudi from Mecca . . . travelled to Afghanistan in 1987 to bring home a younger brother who had gone for jihad. When he crossed the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan he felt his 'heart shake' with the feeling of entering a divine place. Giving up his search for his brother, al-Barakati travelled to Jalalabad, training at one of bin Laden's camps for two months. From there he moved to the deserts around Kandahar, which saw some of the worst fighting of the war. Al-Barakati distinguished himself by exceptional acts of heroism, rising to become the leader of the Arab *mujahideen* in the area. During the summer of 1990, a 120 mm rocket hit the rooftop of a house on which al-Barakati was sitting. Bleeding heavily he was taken to Pakistan for medical attention. On the way he pleaded for death, crying, 'I really am fed up with this worldly life. I really love Allah.'[31]

Within that religious discourse, the idea of martyrdom enjoys a privileged position. Bergen retells a story told to him by the Pakistani journalist Rahimullah Yusufzai of how 'the Arabs would pitch white tents out in the open in the hopes of attracting Soviet fire, hoping for martyrdom. I saw one person who was crying because he survived an air attack.'[32]

In support of their claims of religious piety, militants frequently point to the several *ayat* (Qur'anic verses) which demand violent action. Examples are not hard to come by, and include the injunctions 'Slay the idolaters wherever you find them, and take them captive and besiege them and lie in wait for them in every ambush'[33] and 'Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by Allah and the Messenger, nor acknowledge the religion of Truth, [even if they are] People of the Book.'[34] The argument is that Islam contains within its teachings demands for violence against non-believers, a point which unites unlikely bedfellows.[35]

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[31] P. Bergen, *Holy War Inc.: Inside the Secret World of Osama Bin Laden*. London: Phoenix, 2001, pp. 61–2.

[32] Cited in *ibid*. p. 12.   [33] Qur'an, Sura 9:5.

[34] Qur'an, Sura 9:29. The 'People of the Book' refers to Christians and Jews.

[35] Apart from the militants themselves, vociferous opponents of Islamism and sometimes Islam also agree, most contentiously shown, perhaps, by Geert Wilders in his short film *Fitna*.

Why, then, should this not be accepted as a genuine and complete explanation? Such passages (and others that offer similar injunctions) are regularly drawn upon by militant Salafists as justification for their actions, and they appear clear enough. The problem is, to cite Islam, or any religion, suggests that it is an entity that can be definitively identified and understood. Whilst there exists a body of texts that together form the tenets of the Islamic faith, it is also the case that these must be interpreted. In an assertion of fundamental and religious righteousness, militant Salafists proclaim that 'Islam is something analogous to a computer programme and that by reading its operational code (the Qur'an and *hadiths*) one can discover who is a Muslim and what they should (or should not) do'.[36] This is nonsense. The violent *ayat* that militants claim offer no scope for alternative interpretations are interpreted – as are all religious understandings that depend upon texts and historical lessons. This can and does produce significant differences. The Egyptian Sheikh Mohammad Sayed Tantwai, for example, emphasises the context in which such verses were written. They are, for Tantwai and many others, not to be taken as universals, but seen in their historical context. They do not appeal for continuous warfare waged against non-believers, but allowed Mohammed to defend himself at Medina.[37] Clearly those examined here would disagree, but that is because of alternative understandings born of different interpretations. They would argue that the Qur'an is the word of God delivered directly through the prophet Mohammed, and that interpretation is a deviation from that word. However, the problem with such a view is plain when an apparently clear injunction to violence, such as 'Kill them wherever you find them. Drive them out of places from which they drove you . . . Fight against them until idolatry is no more and Allah's religion reigns supreme',[38] is contained within the same passage as the instruction 'Fight for the sake of Allah against those who fight against you, but do not be violent, because Allah does not love aggressors.'[39] Faced with both injunctions, those who reject interpretation embrace irrationality.

[36] S. Sayyid, *A Fundamental Fear: Eurocentrism and the Emergence of Islamism*, 2nd edn. London: Zed Books, 2003, p. viii.
[37] T. Munthe, 'Terrorism: Not Who but Why?', *Open Democracy*, 20 July 2005.
[38] Qur'an, Sura 2:190–2.   [39] Qur'an, Sura 2:109.

It is also worth noting that the same writings that are used to justify violent jihad today have existed for the best part of two millennia. Despite this there has been a marked lack of such a conception of violent jihad throughout most of that time and in most parts of the world. This is, and always has been, a minority position. This would suggest that the words themselves are less significant than the receptivity of the listeners and persuasiveness and form of the message. One writer echoes many others when he notes that, for over a thousand years:

Muslims who clearly considered themselves 'good Muslims' have been living in close social, political and economic harmony with their Jewish and Christians neighbours. The Muslim treatment of Jews, as is often and rightly repeated, reveals religious tolerance to be the norm rather than the exception. Andalucia is the obvious example, but there are others: the Abbasids in Baghdad, the Fatimids in Cairo, and the Ottoman Turks (who welcomed the Sephardi Jews expelled by Spain in 1492).[40]

To look to religious texts and teachings for unchanging and unmediated explanations for terrorism is an unhelpful line of enquiry. As many injunctions against violence can be found as those arguing for the contrary, and for each, wholly divergent arguments can be found as to the real meaning they offer. The role for religion in militant Salafism lies rather in the particular narrative – informed but not dictated by religion and moulded together with political understandings – that is accepted by militants. Both the religious and the political aspects of militancy must be understood as having been accommodated in a very particular narrative, one which sees the West as hostile to the *ummah* of which the militant Salafist is part, a position to which (their interpretation of) Islam dictates a violent response.

Militant Salafism is a movement inspired by a religious and political metanarrative that demands militancy in the face of alleged Western hostility towards Islam. A militant Salafist is someone who considers their identity as a Muslim as paramount and holds that Muslims face hostility and aggression to which they have a duty to respond with violence.[41] An identification as a particular type of Muslim assumes

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[40] Munthe, 'Terrorism: Not Who but Why?'

[41] As Laustsen and Wæver note, it is this additional step, the idea that the identity is threatened, that differentiates 'conservatives' from 'fundamentalists'. See C. Laustsen and O. Wæver, 'In Defence of Religion: Sacred Referent Objects for Securitization', *Millennium* 26(3), 2000, p. 722.

a privileged position upon which the idea of a global battle between the forces of Islam and those hostile to them is constructed. The two are mutually constitutive – the more entrenched the idea of an existential battle, the more determined the notion of I/We as a particular manner of righteous Muslim(s). Once this move is made, once a threatened Islamic identity and the need to respond violently have been established, there is actually little left in the puzzle of militant Salafism. The interesting questions thus concern how the formation of such an identity is possible and why certain communities are particularly susceptible to it. This question will be addressed in due course. First, we shall explore how many others answer that question.

2 | *What is wrong with these people?*

In the more recent literature on terrorism (from the 1960s onwards), some of the more common explanations for the use of terror by non-state actors were psychological ones, in particular the search for the abnormal personality traits that would explain terrorism.[1] One example of this approach is that of Ferracuti and Bruno, who conducted research on right-wing terrorist groups in Italy. Their conclusion was that those responsible were 'frequently psychopathological'.[2] Such approaches continue to find support today. For example, Walter Laqueur recently wrote that: 'Madness, especially paranoia, plays a role in contemporary terrorism. Not all paranoiacs are terrorists, but all terrorists believe in conspiracies by the powerful, hostile forces and suffer from some form of delusion and persecution mania . . . madness plays an important role, even if many are reluctant to acknowledge it.'[3]

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[1] The same psychologising is rarely applied to those employing terror in the name of the states who are its main exponents. Few analyse the psychological flaws that motivate the soldiers of various states to commit acts of terror.

[2] F. Ferracuti and F. Bruno, 'Psychiatric Aspects of Terrorism in Italy', in I. Barak-Glanatz and C. Huff (eds.), *The Mad, the Bad and the Different: Essays in Honour of Simon Dinitz*. Lexington: Heath, 1981, p. 209. Other advocates of psychological abnormality being significant in explaining terrorism include L. DeMause, 'The Childhood Origins of Terrorism', *Journal of Psychohistory* 29, 2002; R. Pearlstein, *The Mind of the Political Terrorist*. Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1991; J. Post, 'Rewarding Fire with Fire: Effects of Retaliation on Terrorist Group Dynamics', *Terrorism* 10, 1987; J. Post, 'Terrorist Psycho-Logic: Terrorist Behaviour as a Product of Psychological Forces', in W. Reich (ed.), *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies, Theologies, States of Mind*. Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1988; and P. Wilkinson, *Terrorism and the Liberal State*. London: Macmillan, 1977.

[3] W. Laqueur, 'Left, Right and Beyond: The Changing Face of Terror', in J. Hoge and G. Rose (eds.), *How Did This Happen? Terrorism and the New War*. Oxford: Public Affairs, 2001, p. 80.

The reluctance to which Laqueur refers is in fact entirely appropriate, for empirical enquiry offers very little support for such a claim. Over three decades of research by psychologists have demonstrated to all but the most determined advocates that such an approach is misplaced. There is for instance Wilfried Rasch, who examined in detail eleven German terrorists captured in the 1970s. His seminal paper, written on the basis of his expertise as a professor of psychiatry and unparalleled levels of primary investigation, found that those terrorists he examined exhibited no signs of psychological disorders.[4] Silke reports a similar dynamic with the prosecutions of surviving Nazi leaders in Nuremberg. The psychologist at the trials concluded those men were 'violent, power-hungry personalities, obsessed with death and lacking in any real human feeling', a verdict that corresponded with the assumptions of the wider public.[5] Several years later the results of psychological testing on the same men were mixed with a selection from a sample of average Americans. The panel of experts who subsequently reviewed all of the results concluded that all were those of psychologically healthy and normal individuals, and that no meaningful distinction existed between the Nazis and the others.[6]

Silke refers to the propensity to claim that psychological abnormality lies at the root of an individual becoming a terrorist as 'Cheshire-cat logic'.[7] The cat, from Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, believed that there are only mad people in Wonderland. Thus to be in Wonderland it is a logical necessity that you are mad. Many of those writing on terrorism display a similar predilection, believing that 'Terrorist violence is so unusual and runs so contrary to the accepted standards of society, that it seems to suggest psychological anomaly.'[8] The determination of many to see psychological problems as a root cause is reminiscent of the famous study where a population with regular mental health were admitted to psychiatric hospitals. Staff there were

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[4] W. Rasch, 'Psychological Dimensions of Political Terrorism in the Federal Republic of Germany', *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry* 2, 1979. This contradicted earlier assertions such as those of H. Cooper, in 'What Is a Terrorist? A Psychological Perspective', *Legal Medical Quarterly* 1, 1977.

[5] A. Silke, 'Holy Warriors: Exploring the Psychological Processes of Jihadi Radicalization', *European Journal of Criminology* 5(1), 2008, p. 104.

[6] M. Harrower, 'Were Hitler's Henchmen Mad?', *Psychology Today* 6, 1976.

[7] A. Silke, 'Cheshire-Cat Logic: The Recurring Theme of Terrorist Abnormality in Psychological Research', *Psychology, Crime and Law* 4(1), 1998.

[8] *Ibid*. p. 52.

unaware that such an experiment was being conducted. These hospital employees routinely and consistently interpreted the actions of the new 'patients' as attributable to psychological abnormality purely on the basis of their presence in the hospital.[9]

Claims of psychological predispositions in the terrorist literature are generally supported by weak, anecdotal evidence derived from a very small number of terrorists. Take for example Mazarr, particularly relevant here because he not only looks at a small number of cases, but also seeks to combine a more traditional 'psychological approach' with the idea of alienation – the subject of much of what follows.[10] For Mazarr, social and economic grievances 'become most relevant, and most dangerous, when they are breathing life into latent psychological distress'.[11] He writes that the process towards militancy in the Middle East:

begins with disaffections of some sort – some combination of social, economic, political, and cultural angst – built centrally and most profoundly on the mechanism of a collision of identity and dignity in the transition from the traditional to the modern, the non-Western to the Westernized, the rural to the urban. The disaffections can also include a variety of related ills, from economic stagnation to political repression to class divides. Into this dangerous situation steps what has insightfully been called an 'identity entrepreneur' – someone offering a cure for popular alienation and anxiety.[12]

Even when many of the problems of the psychologically flawed approach are accepted, writers often appear reluctant to abandon it altogether, and seek to smuggle the idea in the back door. Thus whilst avoiding an explicit claim that terrorists suffered a particular psychological defect, Post suggests that the terrorists interviewed by another researcher 'demonstrated a feature characteristic of narcissistic individuals'.[13]

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[9] D. Rosenhan, 'On Being Sane in Insane Places', *Science* 179, 1973.

[10] M. Mazarr, 'The Psychological Sources of Islamic Terrorism', *Policy Review* 125, 2005.

[11] *Ibid*. p. 30.

[12] *Ibid*. p. 36. There is actually much to recommend this piece, but these positives are undermined by rooting the analysis in psychological factors for which insufficient evidence is provided.

[13] J. Post, 'Rewarding Fire with Fire', p. 24.

Criticisms of such approaches have been provided at length. In addition to those noted above, other compelling critiques include Horgan, Silke, and Lyons and Harbinson.[14] In light of these it is difficult to see what might persuade those who continue to adhere to this approach of the difficulties incumbent in doing so. Now is not the time to add to a debate that has been intellectually won. The psychological route and some of its difficulties are briefly noted because much of the more recent literature on militant Salafism (which has come to dominate the terrorist field) applies an approach in which several of the same difficulties arise. That alternative is the notion of alienation, and it enjoys a privileged position as a supposed explanation as to why people become militant Salafists. That is not to claim the two approaches – psychologically abnormal and alienated – are equivalent. At times the latter is empirically supported and demonstrates a certain empathy with the perpetrators that is indispensable in understanding and not simply demonising terror.[15] Moreover, the more sophisticated alienation accounts also point us to processes and concepts that are very useful in understanding the phenomenon of militant Salafism, ideas such as deterritorialisation and the political imaginary. However, these positives are undermined by the fact that the concept of alienation suffers from significant difficulties, many of which are shared with the 'psychological abnormality' approach. These are addressed towards the end of the chapter. Before doing so it is necessary to look in some detail as to how alienation is understood to contribute towards militant Salafism.

Alienation

Over half a century ago Robert Nisbet ascribed a central role to the 'hypothesis of alienation in contemporary social science'. He argued that 'it has reached an extraordinary degree of importance. It has

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[14] J. Horgan, *The Psychology of Terrorism*. London: Routledge, 2005; H. Lyons and H. Harbinson, 'A Comparison of Political and Non-Political Murderers in Northern Ireland, 1974–84', *Medicine, Science and the Law* 26, 1986; and A. Silke, 'Becoming a Terrorist', in A. Silke (ed.), *Terrorists, Victims, and Society: Psychological Perspectives on Terrorism and Its Consequences*. Chichester: Wiley, 2003.

[15] It should not need saying that empathy is not the same as sympathy, understanding not the same as condoning. Unfortunately it does.

become nearly as prevalent as the doctrine of enlightened self-interest was two generations ago'.[16] Certainly such a claim is valid in much of the writing on militant Salafism in the West today. For many writers, alienation is *the* crucial concept in understanding and explaining the phenomenon. Unfortunately, neither what it means nor how it is felt to exert the effect it allegedly does are always made clear. There are in fact two main strands in theorising of alienation in militant Salafism: (a) individual and (b) structural.

Dissatisfaction and despair – individual alienation

The idea advanced by writers falling into this category is that individuals are intensely dissatisfied with an aspect of their lives, and that this discontent leads them to seek out, or renders them susceptible to, militant Salafism. A fine example of this approach has been advanced by the German philosopher Hans Magnus Enzensberger. In his 2005 essay 'The Radical Loser' he claims that terrorism is an act of destructive revenge on the part of society's failures.[17] Enzensberger's argument is that in any societal setting there are a few winners and a catalogue of losers. This is particularly the case in a global, capitalist society. Little rhyme or reason for this inequality is evident in such a complicated and vast political, sociological and economic system. Winners triumph and losers fail because of a particular configuration of factors that are neither attributable to, nor understood by, the individual themselves. For most, as the causes cannot be known, they are beyond control, and therefore no reflection on the individual. Enzensberger argues that this is not the case for those to whom the epithet 'Radical Loser' applies. They react differently, angry at this inexplicable process perceived as having served them poorly. The Radical Loser is an individual who perceives a sense of frustrated personal entitlement and who pursues otherwise incomprehensible violence as an act aimed not at redress, but revenge at those deemed culpable.[18] In Enzensberger's words, in 'a chaotic, unfathomable process, the cohorts of the inferior, the defeated, the victims separate out. The loser may accept his fate and resign himself; the victim may demand satisfaction; the defeated

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[16] R. Nisbet, *The Quest for Community*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1953, p. 153.

[17] H. Enzensberger, 'The Radical Loser', *Sign and Sight*, 1 December 2005.

[18] *Ibid*.

may begin preparing for the next round. But the radical loser isolates himself, becomes invisible, guards his delusion, saves his energy, and waits for his hour to come.'[19]

For Enzensberger, Islamism, and implicitly militant Salafism, offers a community for such individuals. It encourages the view that they have been harshly treated, that their predicament is not of their own making. As with other movements, militant Salafism offers the comradeship of the similarly afflicted and replaces their powerlessness with feelings of (temporary) omnipotence.[20] He argues that since the collapse of the Soviet Union,

only one violent movement has been capable of acting globally – Islamism. It is undertaking a large-scale attempt to siphon off the religious energy of a world faith with around 1.3 billion believers that is not only still very much alive, but which even in purely demographic terms is also expanding on every continent. Although this Umma is subject to much inner fragmentation and badly affected by national and social conflicts, the ideology of Islamism is an ideal means of mobilizing radical losers because of the way it amalgamates religious, political and social motives.[21]

Enzensberger asks us to note the list of enemies of Islamism.[22] They are very similar to those claimed by earlier generations of violent movements in the West – the United States, the decadent West, capitalism, Zionism. Radical Islamists have added another, the unbelievers. As such, not only are the enemies remarkably similar to those of other militant groups, they include the vast majority of people. This meets the Radical Losers' need to strike at the nameless multitude, those individuals who live in ignorance of the responsibility they supposedly bear in the failure of a fanatic few. The point for Enzensberger is that the appeal of militant Islamism lies in the provision of a comprehensive list of designated enemies and legitimisation of the use of violence against them. It does so because of the alienation of some individuals from their society and a resultant desire for retribution.

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[19] *Ibid*.
[20] He notes several dozen movements whose cause is immaterial, as do others noted later.
[21] M. Enzensberger, 'The Radical Loser'.
[22] A good example of inaccurate terminology conflating a range of beliefs and practices.

Ian Buruma builds upon Enzensberger's theorising of the Radical Loser. Much of his writing on this centres on Mohammed Bouyeri, the man who first shot van Gogh and then tried to behead him with a knife. He used another knife to plant a note on his body. Buruma writes how Bouyeri

was born in Holland, though his parents were from Morocco. As a teenager he tried to conform to the culture of his native city. He got drunk, smoked dope, and tried to seduce Dutch girls. After all, everything in the culture, from pop music to TV commercials, promises sex. This is a world away from home, where the saintly mother and virginal sisters must be protected from lustful eyes.

But things began to go wrong for Mohammed. The Dutch girls were not as easy as he thought. He lost interest in his studies. Subsidies for this and that failed to materialise. There were nasty brushes with the police. And his sister got a boyfriend. This enraged Mohammed. He felt dishonoured, useless, excluded. He was, in short, a radical loser, and Islamism promised righteous murder, martyrdom, and the feeling, however fleeting, of total power.[23]

Buruma thus adds a sexual factor to the explanatory mix, and in so doing touches upon an aspect of militant Salafism that remains under-explored. Despite the overwhelming dominance of men in the ranks of militant Salafists, and their very considerable concern with the appropriate roles and practices of the genders, the role of gender remains here a poorly researched area. Buruma notes the role of sex in conferring on some people the status of loser, something to which their individual psychology may add the potentially lethal notion of radicalism. Such men come to light when they, and their misogynistic rage, erupt in an orgy of violence.

In support of this thesis, Buruma notes that Mohammed Atta, the lead hijacker in the 2001 attacks on New York and Washington, 'visited a striptease bar before crashing a plane into the Twin Towers...The fact that it was forbidden – repulsive but also terribly seductive – marked his view of women in general.'[24] Atta and the other hijackers are also alleged to have watched pornographic films and requested the services of prostitutes in the hotel they were staying in on the eve

[23] I. Buruma, 'Extremism: The Loser's Revenge', *The Guardian*, 25 February 2006.
[24] *Ibid.*

of the attacks.[25] This is clearly at odds with the moral prescriptions that were starkly evident in Atta's will, drawn up five years before the attacks, which insisted the purity of his dead body should not be undermined by women touching it.[26] Atta and the Hamburg cell are not alone. The Dutch militants known as the Hofstad group used to watch particularly graphic and violent sexual downloads together.[27]

For those who apply this thesis to militant Salafism, the significance of this type of alienation-through-failure is that it leads to a desire to pursue revenge against those who are held responsible for that failure. Militancy's appeal is held to lie in the opportunity it gives losers to exact revenge against the winners. The choice of militant Salafism as an ideology is viewed as contingent. Other movements could in principle fulfil the same role. Whether a disgruntled individual chooses Nazism, militant Salafism or Communism owes more to which militant ideology is the flavour of the month than to the persuasiveness of the philosophy.[28] As one observer argued, 'like fascism and Communism before it, radical Islam provides a sense of purpose and meaning for losers and misfits who blame their misfortunes on "the system" (variously defined as the ruling class, the Jews, the capitalists, Col. Sanders, etc.)'.[29] Professions of religious or political grievance will yield little insight as to their militancy. For answers to that it is to the individual and their perceived deficiencies that we must turn. It is the enemy that matters, not the objectives. The militant Salafist is striking back, and they are doing so not for a greater cause but to lash out in anger at their own failings. According to this

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[25] McDermott, *Perfect Soldiers. The 9/11 Hijackers*, p. 230.

[26] Anonymous, 'Trail of a Terrorist', *PBS Website*, 21 October 2001, available at www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/trail.

[27] A. Benschop, interview with author, 24 September 2007, and P. Costello, 'The Secret Life of Mohammed Bouyeri', *Front Page Magazine*, 28 July 2005.

[28] This is why occasional defections between such movements enjoy considerable coverage. Two examples of people who have moved from far right politics to militant Salafism are David Myatt and Steven Smyrek. Myatt was the founder and a key member of the extreme British National Socialist Movement, before turning to militant jihadism. See N. Woolcock and D. Kennedy, 'What the Neo-Nazi Fanatic Did Next: Switched to Islam', *The Times*, 24 April 2006. Smyrek, a German neo-Nazi, converted to Islam, trained in Afghanistan and was arrested in Israel in 1997 where he was reportedly planning an attack. Agreeing to renounce violence he was released in 2004, but appears somewhat unrepentant. See L. Vidino, *Al Qaeda in Europe: The New Battleground of International Jihad*. New York: Prometheus Books, 2006, p. 33.

[29] J. Goldberg, 'I Have Rights', *The National Review*, 5 August 2005.

approach, militant Salafism is nothing more than a convenient vehicle through which to inflict damage on a society that is seen to have done them an injustice. Hence one reporter suggests: 'These outbursts of irrational violence in the West . . . are the works of loners and losers incapable of addressing their own disillusionment in any constructive or creative way, who end up creating death cults instead: they devise their own suicide as a kind of last "fuck you" to the world.'[30]

Advocates of this approach offer the same explanatory account for both terrorism and a broader array of violence. For them, the cause of militant political action is the same as that of the apolitical violence of those angst-ridden individuals who open fire in college campuses, schools and shopping centres. As one observer argues in reference to the 2005 attacks on London: 'We should look upon 7/7 as a peculiarly British version of the kind of irrational gun rampages that occasionally take place in America, such as the horrific shootings at an Amish school in Pennsylvania . . . these are not political acts, but rather violent screams of rage.'[31] Similarly, Cesari argues that suicidal militant Salafism is the 'same phenomenon that we find when young Americans start to shoot with an AK-47 in their school, kill people and afterwards commit suicide and actually stage their death'.[32] Seemingly the cause of the violence of individuals such as Thomas Hamilton, Marc Lépine, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold is the same as that of militant Salafists.[33] This is considered shortly.

In such accounts, it is individual alienation that is paramount. Some of those individuals strike in isolation, others look for movements that offer the possibility of exacting revenge. They join groups of like-minded losers, united by an ideology that offers both an enemy and a means to hurt them. Militant Salafism, with its violent ideology and its division of the world between good and evil, is the perfect vehicle

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[30] B. O'Neill, 'Terror in the Classroom', *The Guardian*, 3 October 2006.
[31] *Ibid.*
[32] J. Cesari, 'Muslims in Europe and the Risk of Radicalism', in R. Coolsaet (ed.), *Jihadi Terrorism and the Radicalisation Challenge in Europe*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008, p. 112.
[33] Hamilton killed 16 children and one teacher, in a rampage in a school in Dunblane, Scotland in 1996, before turning the gun on himself. In 1989, Lépine opened fire in the École Polytechnique de Montréal, Canada. Shouting 'I hate feminists', he killed 26 people before shooting himself. Harris and Klebold were the two boys responsible for the Columbine massacre, which claimed 15 lives including their own.

for their frustration. It provides an explanation for the woes the Radical Loser suffered, as well as an escape from them in its prescription of self-righteous violence.

Other accounts also claim that alienation in the form of intense dissatisfaction contributes to militancy. They argue that an identifiable pattern of distress and dissatisfaction or a single significant event can start someone on the path to militancy. Thus Sageman argues that, 'Just before they joined the jihad, the prospective *mujahedin* were socially and spiritually alienated and probably in some form of distress.'[34] For him, future militants owe their future militancy, at least in part, to a state of *probable* distress and unhappiness. In a similar vein, he writes that:

Those who feel that society as a whole has the least to offer them are the most likely to join. This points to the importance of relative subjective deprivation in combination with . . . [s]ocial isolation . . . Disappointment with one's social and economic condition combined with the relative lack of social attachment to the world encourages participation in sectarian practices, especially in the presence of unopposed strong bonding to people already in the sect.[35]

Another commentator argues that militants 'may have suffered tragedy in their lives, such as family death, or grapple with lack of love or worthwhile employment'.[36] It is significant that in both of these cases the assertions are plausible but wholly unsubstantiated. They are *probably* distressed, they *may* have suffered tragedy. I shall return to this point later.

The most common approach for those who subscribe to this alienation as distress approach is to offer a short biography of an individual who proceeds to militancy. It is the unhappiness and dissatisfaction that the person endures that is felt to help to explain their subsequent militancy. As such, when writers detail the anguish at certain points in people's lives, it is not mere description that is being offered. Rather, that account is supposed evidence for a theory that sees profound upset at key events in one's life as constituting a crucial part of the

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[34] M. Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004, p. 98.
[35] *Ibid*. p. 118.
[36] J. Larsson, 'Religious Ideologies', in J. Forest (ed.), *The Making of a Terrorist*. Westport: Praeger, 2006, p. 184.

explanation as to why some individuals pursue a path of militant Salafism. By way of illustration, a few examples of this approach are selected from the many that might have been.

One of those who failed in their efforts to blow up parts of the London transport system in July 2005 was Muktar Said Ibrahim. Subsequent to the attacks, much of the information about him has surrounded his upbringing, which was underprivileged and marked by abandonment and violence. This is not mere description. It is inter-woven into accounts as at least a partial explanation as to why Ibrahim pursued the course he did. One example of such reporting/ explanation is the following:

Ibrahim arrived with his family as an asylum seeker from Eritrea and was granted exceptional leave to remain in 1992 as a dependant aged 14…He attended Canons High School, a comprehensive in Edgware, north London, until he was 16. A year after leaving he was arrested with four other youths…after a street robbery…Ibrahim received five years because he had been carrying a knife.[37]

Other commentators explained:

It is believed he was 'bounced around' from one institution to another – Feltham in west London, Aylesbury, Bedford, Huntercombe near Henley-on-Thames, and Wood Hill at Milton Keynes. The number of moves is highly unusual for a juvenile, and implies either appearances at different courts, or being seen as a problem by governors…Former friends were quoted yesterday as saying that, as a youngster, he smoked cannabis and was known as a troublemaker.[38]

It is significant that these reports do not delve, for example, into the ideological content of militant Salafist philosophies. Indeed they rarely spend time examining the claims made by those terrorists as to the reasons for their terrorism. Rather, the frustratingly implicit sugges-tion is that the disadvantage experienced by Said Ibrahim and others is a key reason for their militancy. It is for that reason that there are similar portrayals of the background of another of the would-be bombers, Yassin Hassan Omar. Omar was

[37] D. Gardham and P. Johnston, 'Terror Suspect Is a Convicted Mugger', *The Telegraph*, 17 August 2005.

[38] A. Travis and A. Gillian, 'Bomb Suspect "Became a Militant" in Prison', *The Guardian*, 28 July 2005.

a Somali who arrived in Britain in 1992 at the age of 11 with his elder sister and her husband, who were seeking asylum ... [I]n the next year he was taken into care and spent the next seven years in various foster homes.

After passing through the homes of a number of foster carers, Omar was assessed as a 'vulnerable young adult' and assisted in finding a property under a 'leaving care' scheme operated by social services.[39]

Ahmed Ressam was arrested trying to cross the border from Canada into the United States en route to blow up Los Angeles airport. Much of the writing on him detailed the effect of a childhood illness that frustrated his education and in turn negatively impacted his future.[40] This disappointment is held to have contributed to his embracing of militant Salafism. At sixteen, he was sent from his native Algeria to France where doctors diagnosed an ulcer.

When he returned home several months later, he had missed so many classes that he had to repeat a year of high school. He had a knack for numbers and was focused in the toughest track of studies, mathematics. But he failed his final exam. It was a stunning blow, denying him access to the university. Suddenly, life's options diminished. He tried to land a job as a policeman but was told he wasn't qualified. The doors to the middle class were closing in his face.[41]

And it is such frustrated expectations that are held to have contributed to his subsequent militancy. A similar tale to that of Ressam has been told of one of those who bombed the London transport system in 2005. Germaine Lindsay had intended to go to a specific university, but due to a mix-up in posting his application, he was not accepted.[42] Again, this is recounted because the profound frustration that it purportedly engendered is felt to have contributed to the appeal of militant Salafism.

With little variation, the names of those above could be replaced with that of Mohammed Bouyeri, as his story is told by Buruma. He describes how Bouyeri suffered 'another setback. In November 1997,

[39] *Ibid*.
[40] H. Bernton *et al*., 'The Terrorist Within: The Story Behind One Man's Holy War against America', *The Seattle Times/PBS*, 7 July 2002, and Anonymous, 'Trail of a Terrorist'.
[41] Bernton *et al*., 'The Terrorist Within: The Story Behind One Man's Holy War against America'.
[42] F. Stockman and D. Slack, 'For Jamaican Native, Life Path Led from Success to Extremism', *The Boston Globe*, 22 July 2005.

he got into a brawl with a number of policemen in a coffeeshop in Amsterdam. When he applied for a security job at Schiphol Airport a year later, he was turned down because of a negative police report'.[43] Later on:

Barely free, after twelve weeks in jail, another blow. Mohammed's mother died of breast cancer. He had been her favourite child. Despite his periodic tantrums, Mohammed was good at hiding his feelings. He didn't attend her funeral in Morocco, and the effect of her death on him was not immediately apparent to others. But people who knew him well thought he had become more introspective. He wanted to 'find the truth', he later wrote in a farewell letter to his family, just before he murdered Van Gogh.[44]

Such accounts see militant Salafism as attractive because it offers profoundly dissatisfied individuals the possibility to enjoy redemption from a life of social transgressions, petty crime, educational under-achievement, aimless drifting and/or a traumatic experience.[45] Thus Wiktorowicz refers to the process of radicalisation to militancy as the search 'for some satisfactory system of religious meaning to interpret and resolve . . . discontent'.[46]

Robert Pape has written about this practice of offering detailed descriptions of negative periods of people's lives as a supposed explanation of their militancy, noting the frequency with which it occurs. He details how:

for the past few decades, journalists, scholars, and other researchers have written a multitude of accounts that seek to explain the individual logic of suicide terrorism by assembling the life narratives of specific suicide bombers. These life narratives follow a similar pattern. Typically, the writer begins by interviewing the suicide bomber's immediate family, friends, and other close associates, asking detailed questions about the personal history and psychological condition of the individual. From these interviews, the suicide attacker's life story is stitched together, often with painstaking effort

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[43] I. Buruma, *Murder in Amsterdam: The Death of Theo Van Gogh and the Limits of Tolerance*. London: Atlantic Books, 2006, p. 200.

[44] *Ibid*. p. 207.

[45] Such accounts are not limited to Western militants. See L. Bokhari *et al.*, 'Paths to Global Jihad: Radicalisation and Recruitment to Terror Networks', *FFI/RAPPORT*, 2006, pp. 35–6, available at www.mil.no/multimedia/archive/00077/Paths_to_global_jiha_77735a.pdf.

[46] Cited in *ibid*., p. 36. The quotation is actually from R. Stark and W. Bainbridge, *A Theory of Religion*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996, p. 223.

to identify the key moments of transition that 'caused' the person to wish to die and so to willingly accept a suicide terrorist mission.[47]

For Pape, such descriptions are ultimately unsatisfactory as an explanation. He is right. The problem is not that all claims that a very individual alienation significantly contributes to militancy are without substance. Rather, it remains unanswered, and likely unanswerable, as to how frequently this is the case – how many individuals were alienated in this manner and the extent to which this had a bearing on their later militancy. Before exploring these issues we should turn to the second idea of alienation explored here, one that owes more to the structures within which the individual exists.

Talking about this generation – structural alienation

Even more than with the individual alienation approach, the idea that structural alienation holds the key to explaining radicalisation and subsequent militancy enjoys considerable support. This purported explanation counts amongst its adherents several of the most knowledgeable and sophisticated analysts of militant Salafism. It is one that relies heavily on the idea of generational alienation, emphasising that militant Salafism is a phenomenon that overwhelmingly attracts a particular young and male demographic. It holds that the appeal of militant Salafism lies largely in the unprecedented circumstances in which Muslims of this age group find themselves. Roy, for example, argues that those proceeding to militancy:

fall roughly into three categories: 1) second generation young males…2) young men who came from North Africa or the Middle-East and settled in the West either to study or to work, 3) converts who are often outcasts (non-Muslim racial minorities, usually black and/or Caribbean, former delinquents converted in jail, drug-addicts who found in Islam a way to quit addiction, or just 'buddies' who joined their Muslim friends when the latter became 'born-again'). All of them are fully westernized and usually keep aloof from the mainstream Muslims.[48]

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[47] Pape, *Dying to Win*, p. 171.

[48] O. Roy, 'A Clash of Cultures or a Debate on Europe's Values?', *ISIM Review* 15, Spring 2005, p. 6. A similar categorisation is offered by the AIVD, the Dutch secret service, which also argued that recruits to militant Salafism 'can be divided into three risk groups. The first category are the so-called converts, born and raised autochthonous Dutch youths who converted to the

More specifically, the idea here is that militants find themselves apart from both their parents' generation and the broader society in which they live. For Roy, 'we are not dealing with the reaction of a traditional Muslim community, but with a reformulation in religious terms of the more general revolt of a generation adrift between its culture of origin and westernisation'.[49] Similarly, for another commentator, 'Today's radicals are a new breed. They are rebelling not only against their society, but against their own community and its traditional leaders.'[50]

Analysts and commentators writing within this structural/generational approach are not united in their understanding as to why these men are supposedly alienated. Most argue that Western Muslims face ethnic rejection, and that militant Salafism offers them a refuge from this. This is considered later. The other view, detailed now, is rather that the spur to militancy is economic discrimination and disadvantage.

Economic deprivation

Although there are considerable regional and national variations, Muslims in the West continue to command poorer wages and worse positions than many other groups. This is deemed to be different than was the case for earlier generations, who also undoubtedly fared worse than many of their contemporaries. Forty to fifty years ago, European societies in particular drew workers from recently decolonised territories to do the jobs that domestic citizens would not. As Buruma writes, 'the dirty work, in the boom years, was done by "guest workers" ... single men cooped up in cheap hostels, prepared to do almost anything to provide for their families back home'.[51] This was rarely conceived of as a permanent arrangement, but for many, that is

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Islamic belief and seem to grow towards a willingness to deploy activities in support of or participating in the jihad ... The second category is that of young immigrants who have only been in the Netherlands for a couple of years, who only recently obtained a temporary or not even an official residence permit and who do not master the Dutch language very well ... The third category concerns youths who may be defined as either second or third generation immigrants in the Netherlands'. AIVD, 'Annual Report 2001', 2002, pp. 9–10.

[49] Roy, 'A Clash of Cultures or a Debate on Europe's Values?'
[50] C. Power, 'The Lost Generation', *Newsweek*, 7 August 2005.
[51] Buruma, *Murder in Amsterdam*, p. 20.

what transpired. Nonetheless, improvements were slow. Theirs continued to be a life of minimum and minimal wages for the privilege of working in jobs non-immigrants would not countenance. Moreover, their fate was their children's inheritance, and it is here that some analysts locate the inequities and frustration that they believe to be at the root of Western militancy. The argument is that some Muslims believe militant Salafism offers an explanation for and possible resolution to the the economic inequity they face in the country in which they were born. It is in that context that Kepel writes of how the Muslim populations of Britain

have taken the full force of postindustrial economic restructuring from the late 1970's onwards. Whereas previously these populations had access to numerous unskilled or semi-skilled jobs, many of them now find themselves condemned to long-term unemployment, and the future for their children of working age looks bleak. Apart from a few elite groups, they have rarely acquired the cultural capital needed in 'postmodern' societies to gain access to relatively stable jobs. Many of them feel themselves to be victim of racist discrimination.[52]

Kepel writes that 'large numbers of young people from immigrant families [are] victims of social disintegration and labour-market exclusion yet officially citizens of a country where most of them were born'.[53] It is such individuals who are deemed particularly susceptible to militancy. Others support that notion. Sageman, for example, describes a number of wealthy Arab immigrants sent to Europe in order to continue their studies. He notes how 'in their host countries, they were alienated, underemployed, and perhaps discriminated against, and therefore in a situation of relative deprivation'.[54] These men became militants.

Such descriptions of Muslims' disadvantage are offered because of the understanding that their relative poverty, and their perception of it, is felt to offer at least a partial explanation for militancy. Those who take this view usually also present other factors felt to have contributed to an individual's militancy. However, the original impetus for

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[52] G. Kepel, *Allah in the West: Islamic Movements in America and Europe.* Oxford: Polity, 1997, p. 84.
[53] *Ibid*. p. 237.   [54] Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, p. 97.

militancy is seen as attributable to the socio-economic disadvantage of Muslims in the Western world.

Ethnic exclusion

The more popular strand in the structural alienation approach is the idea that Western Muslims are excluded from the society into which they live, and were often born into, on the basis of their ethnicity. Again, earlier immigrants may have suffered similarly, but their expectations were such that this was less keenly felt. Their children, born into Western society, neither anticipated nor accepted the prejudice their parents bore. Several authors and analysts detail this rejection by Western countries. Again Kepel provides a good example of this thought, writing how 'Neither the blood spilled by Muslims from North Africa fighting in French uniforms during both world wars nor the sweat of migrant laborers, living under deplorable living conditions, who rebuilt France (and Europe) for a pittance after 1945, has made their children, as far as the French or indeed Europeans in general are concerned, full fellow citizens.'[55]

Tales of such exclusion very often emerge in accounts of the histories of individuals as in part explaining their militancy. Richard Reid, the young British man who attempted to blow up a plane from France to the United States, is a case in point. His father is a black Jamaican, his mother is white and English. He suffered racist abuse and was ostracised at school. When he met his father after a period in prison, he remarked on the difficulty and distress caused to a British young man to be told, 'Go home, nigger.'[56] In combination with unemployment and loneliness, such racism is said to have led him to depression. As a result, according to his aunt, he was vulnerable to people offering friendship and meaning to his life. She explained how he 'was so lonely, his life was so empty. He found solace with his Muslim brothers. With him, it became more than a religion. They became his brothers.'[57]

[55] G. Kepel, *The War for Muslim Minds: Islam and the West*. London: Belknap Press, 2004, p. 268.

[56] M. Elliott, 'The Shoe Bomber's World', *Time World*, 25 February 2002.

[57] Cited in O. Craig, 'From Tearaway to Terrorist – the Story of Richard Reid', *The Telegraph*, 31 December 2001.

Another example often offered is that of Zacarias Moussaoui, serving a life sentence for his role in the 2001 World Trade Center attacks. In a biography written by the person who knew him best, his brother offers the following description of their childhood in France:

Every day after school, Zac and I would play marbles with the same friend, who was a neighbour. A few months after we'd gone back to school after the summer, one afternoon, at around 4.30, he appeared as usual. We called out to him: 'Remi!' He didn't budge. He looked at us. From afar. We walked over to him to ask him what was the matter.

> 'I can't play with you.'
> 'How come? Why can't you play with us?'
> 'Because my parents said I can't.'
> 'But why have your parents said you can't play with us today? We play marbles together every day.'
> 'No, it's not just today. It's for always. They say that you're niggers, and they don't want me to play with niggers.'[58]

That racist rejection did not go away. As he describes, 'Later on, as teenagers, we had different reactions. The girls we went out with would often tell us their parents disapproved of us and didn't want their daughters hanging out with Arabs.'[59] As second-generation immigrants, such racism was unacceptable in a way that was not the case with their parents. Secondly, as non-immigrants, there was no refuge to be found in any other community. They found themselves adrift between two cultures. As his brother explained:

We didn't feel like born-and-bred French people, and we realized as much every time we came across racism. We didn't live like Moroccans either... Thus a void insidiously formed within us, an abyss which Zacarias and I would both try to negotiate, but in different ways. Like many young people of our generation, we were aware that we were not well acquainted with our original culture. We knew nothing about almost all the social codes of the Arab world. And yet we were not truly accepted in the country of our birth.[60]

Many other accounts agree with Roy that 'a clear generation gap divides the second generation, born and educated in Europe, from the first, in terms not only of culture and language but also of social

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[58] A. Moussaoui, *Zacarias Moussaoui: The Making of a Terrorist*, trans. F. Bouquillat. London: Serpent's Tale, 2003, p. 58.
[59] *Ibid*. p. 61.   [60] *Ibid*. p. 58.

expectations'.[61] The authors of a book on north London's Finsbury Park mosque, the institution that was at the centre of the radical Islamist community in a city that was the centre of militant activity in the West, offered the same explanation. They wrote that those attending the mosque were

[a] typical mix of social dropouts, petty criminals who had had brushes with prison, the homeless, drug users, asylum seekers who had run away from their own conflicts, and enthusiastic teenagers . . . at odds with their families. They came from various nationalities, but all shared a feeling of alienation and anger. These boys were almost all from immigrant backgrounds, and felt cheated that their fathers' hard work had not been amply rewarded since they came to Britain. They were ashamed that their parents had been too subservient. This generation was not going to stomach what they regarded as second-class treatment, or the racist taunts and violence from white gangs who wanted to drive them from their inner-city communities.[62]

For proponents of this thesis, the rejection they endure, combined with a failure to identify in a meaningful sense with a local or national community, renders young Muslims susceptible to another form of identity that consciously target 'their sense of being victims of racism, exclusion and loneliness in the West'.[63] Accordingly, in Britain militancy is felt to have its strongest appeal amongst those 'schizophrenically suspended between the presumed "ethnic culture" of their parents' homeland and the equally presumed "British" way of life'.[64]

[61] O. Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*. London: Hurst, 2004, p. 101.

[62] S. O'Neill and D. McGrory, *The Suicide Factory: Abu Hamza and the Finsbury Park Mosque*. London: Harper Perennial, 2006, pp. 78–9. Note the mix of types of alienation. This is explored in more detail in the later critique.

[63] Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*, p. 309. For some other examples, see Buruma, *Murder in Amsterdam*, p. 116; N. Oussekine, cited in A. Lebor, *A Heart Turned East: Among the Muslims of Europe and America*. London: Little, Brown & Company, 1997, p. 161; G. Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2002, p. 310; and J. Gunning, 'Terrorism, Charities and Diasporas: Contrasting the Fundraising Practices of Hamas and Al Qaeda Amongst Muslims in Europe', in T. Biersteker and S. Eckert (eds.), *Countering the Financing of Terrorism*. New York: Routledge, 2008, p. 106.

[64] S. Vertovec, 'Young Muslims in Keighley, West Yorkshire: Cultural Identity, Context and "Community"', in S. Vertovec and A. Rogers (eds.), *Muslim European Youth: Reproducing Ethnicity, Religion, Culture*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998, p. 87.

And this is not peculiar to Britain. Elsewhere in the West, the same sentiments are claimed and the same logic is applied.

According to this approach, militant Salafism proves effective because of its provision of identity to people who are questioning their own, having had it questioned by others. They are reminded that their ethnicity trumps their citizenship and birth, race and religion proving more important than location.[65] In response, they answer 'the "don't know" riddle by discovering a new assertive and transnational identity as Muslims'.[66] It is in this vein that Ibrahim argues that 'the militant Islamic groups with their emphasis on brotherhood, mutual sharing, and spiritual support become the functional equivalent of the extended family to the youngster who has left his behind. In other words, the Islamic group fulfils a de-alienating function for its members in ways that are not matched by other rival political movements.'[67] Similarly, Coolsaet and Swielande write that, in 'their subgroup they [militants] find the proximity and the sense of belonging that they think they cannot find elsewhere',[68] and Gunning argues that 'support for al Qaeda can be expected to be highest amongst those who feel socially or politically isolated and are in search of an absolutist identity'.[69] Another commentator adds that new immigrants who went on to militancy, people such as Mohammed Atta and Ziad Jarrah, two of the hijackers in the 2001 World Trade Center attacks, 'felt alienated and isolated when they left their home countries, and extremist Islam not only provided them with new friends but also with

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[65] It is interesting to note that a survey of Muslims in Europe showed that approximately 50 per cent more felt Europe was hostile to Muslims than had suffered a bad personal experience; see Pew Research Center, 'Muslims in Europe: Economic Worries Top Concerns About Religious and Cultural Identity', 2006, p. 2. Whilst not definitive, this suggests that personal experience is an insufficient explanation for militancy. The question remains as to why such a perception of Western hostility predominates.

[66] A. Waldman, 'Bombings in London; Seething Unease Shaped British Bombers' Newfound Zeal', *The New York Times*, 31 July 2005.

[67] S. Ibrahim, 'Anatomy of Egypt's Militant Islamic Groups: Methodological Note and Preliminary Findings', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 12, 1980, p. 448.

[68] R. Coolsaet and T. de Swielande, 'Epilogue: Zeitgeist and (De-) Radicalisation', in R. Coolsaet (ed.), *Jihadi Terrorism and the Radicalisation Challenge in Europe*, p. 170.

[69] J. Gunning, 'Terrorism, Charities and Diasporas: Contrasting the Fundraising Practices of Hamas and Al Qaeda Amongst Muslims in Europe', p. 106.

a new identity and a place in the world'.[70] Still another claimed that in 'the Muslim diaspora in Western plutocracies, Muslims, unified by experiences of racism and Islamopobia [*sic*], are brought into contact with each other increasingly as Muslims rather than members of ethnic or national communities'.[71]

This is an important approach. Many renowned writers in the field subscribe to the idea that a poverty of identification leads a proportion of young Muslims to search for an alternative identity, or leaves them more receptive to an alternative they may be offered. Kepel argues that: 'When you're in the state of such alienation you become easy prey to the *jihadi* guys.'[72] For Khosrokhavar, the alienation leads to an identification with a radicalised Muslim minority, and from there to a feeling of camaraderie with Muslims elsewhere who are held to be oppressed and victimised. He argues that the suffering of the individual adrift from society mirrors that of Muslims worldwide. Further, the reasons for all their suffering – their adherence to true Islam and the hostility of 'the West' to Muslims and Islam– cements a perceived relationship of pure co-religionists.[73] Nonetheless, the popularity of this approach, and the undoubted knowledge of many of its advocates, should not hide from us the very significant problems it faces. Taken together, these seriously undermine the usefulness of alienation as a concept to help explain militancy.

The unjustified popularity of the alienation thesis

Ambiguity of the employment of alienation

One significant problem with the explanatory claims made about alienation in relation to militant Salafism is that it is very often left infuriatingly loosely defined, if indeed it is defined at all. That is not to say alienation as a concept has no use either in the social sciences more generally, or in terrorism more specifically. It has after all been usefully

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[70] P. Neumann, 'A Crisis of Identity and the Appeal of Jihad', *International Herald Tribune*, 5 July 2007.

[71] Sayyid, *A Fundamental Fear*, p. xx.

[72] Cited in B. Livesey, 'The Salafist Movement', *PBS Website*, 25 January 2005.

[73] F. Khosrokhavar, *Suicide Bombers: Allah's New Martyrs*, trans. D Macey. London: Pluto Press, 2005.

applied by Marx, Durkheim (who uses the term *anomie*), Sartre and others. Such luminaries, however, stand in stark contrast to many of those using it in the context of militant Salafism, who are very rarely explicit as to what is being described. The point here is not that alienation is not a factor that may contribute to militancy, but that it is not clear in many of these accounts precisely what that alienation is, still less how it is held to work. Without a clear understanding of how a term is being used, it rapidly becomes 'a panchreston – a vague term that when analysed is essentially meaningless. In attempting to explain all, it ultimately explains nothing.'[74]

Further, this under-theorisation is compounded by a tendency by many to employ various understandings at different times in their work. For example, in a book specifically addressing militant Salafism in Europe, Vidino argues that many 'malleable Westerners' are being attracted to militant Salafism because it addresses nearly every form of 'alienation' on offer. He argues that militant Salafism offers strict rules that are appealing to 'disorientated young men in search of discipline', 'people whose mixed race leads to a confusion of identity' and those suffering second-generation alienation, economic disadvantage and exposure to racism. It offers a 'sense of belonging and community', 'a sense of purpose discovered whilst in prison', 'a form of protest'.[75] Perhaps each of these understandings of alienation had an impact to varying degrees on individuals and their path to militancy, but this is a triviality that does little to increase our understanding of militant Salafism. When and how alienation is felt to make its telling contribution to militancy, and what that contribution is, is left for others to determine.

Weak evidence

There are certainly easier topics to gather information on than militant Salafism. Militants are usually known after they are either dead or incarcerated. Those able to talk usually prove unwilling to do so. Moreover, the field is beset with inaccurate reporting and outright fabrications. Nonetheless, such difficulties represent obstacles to be

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[74] I. Williamson and C. Cullingford, 'The Uses and Misuses of "Alienation" in the Social Sciences and Education', *British Journal of Educational Studies* 45(3), 1997, p. 263.

[75] Vidino, *Al Qaeda in Europe: The New Battleground of International Jihad*, pp. 26–38.

overcome, not excuses for not trying. However, very little empirical evidence is presented in support of the bold claims that alienation plays a key role in militant Salafism. There has been no systematic exploration of which militants were alienated in what manner and how they became so, the key explanatory claim made by so many analysts.

An illustration of this important point is provided by Pape. In a systematic account of suicide bombers, and in contrast to many other analyses, Pape argues that very few are 'social misfits, criminally insane, or professional losers. Most fit a nearly opposite profile: typically they are psychologically normal, have better than average economic prospects for their communities, and are deeply integrated into social networks.'[76] And yet, the literature of suicide bombers continues to cite personal alienation as a key factor. As Pape acknowledges, what he terms 'anomic suicide' could be a factor in the decisions of some to become terrorists, but as he notes, a lack of empirical evidence seriously undermines claims of alienation as a causal factor beyond a small number of cases.[77] His criticism is persuasive. Without considerably more research, we are at best left with an intuitively plausible notion that is empirically verifiable only to a limited degree in some people. In what other field of social science would this position meet with similar support? This insubstantial claim does little to increase our understanding as to why militant Salafism is proving so attractive to so many.

Furthermore, were more empirical research conducted, it is unlikely to offer much support to proponents of the alienation thesis. Whilst there are examples of individuals for whom some idea of alienation may be plausibly posited, there are also many where the reverse is true. The following examples are given by way of illustration – there are many others.

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[76] Pape, *Dying to Win*, p. 23. Sageman makes the same point – that militant Salafism is generally perpetrated by 'middle-class, educated young men from caring and religious families, who grew up with strong positive values of religion, spirituality, and concern for their communities': Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, p. 96. Curiously though, he then speculates that 'just before they joined the jihad, the prospective mujahedin were socially and spiritually alienated and probably in some form of distress', *ibid*. p. 98.

[77] *Ibid*. p. 184.

In 2004, Mohammed Siddique Khan filmed a tape in which he explained he was fulfilling his religiously mandated defence of Muslims, a bulwark against Western hostility towards 'his people'.[78] Yet only five years earlier this unassuming man was a key member of his Beeston community, a man who worked hard to improve the lot of individuals across the local communities. As one account states: 'Few men were more popular on the streets of Beeston than the 30-year-old family man'.[79] As with his fellow conspirators, Shehzad Tanweer, Hasid Hussain and Germaine Lindsay, it is only a commitment to the idea that alienation *must* be a factor in militancy that dictates claims to that effect in the case of these men. As the official report into the attack writes, three of the four, 'Khan, Tanweer and Hussain, were well integrated into British society', whilst 'Lindsay appears to have had more instability at various points in his life, but not exceptionally so'.[80] Thus of the four men who blew up 52 people, only one exhibited any signs of alienation, and even against the backdrop of the mass murder of dozens of people, this was deemed nothing out of the ordinary. This is hardly an endorsement of the idea that militants emerge from the ranks of the alienated, however defined. Interestingly such evidence is insufficient to dissuade some knowledgeable commentators from suggesting alienation as a key factor in the men's militancy.[81]

For another example we might turn to Vidino's description of Ahmed Saeed Sheikh:

the British-born son of a wealthy Pakistani clothes merchant, grew up in the affluent London suburb of Wanstead. Sheikh attended the Forest school in East London, a prestigious private institution where he was well-liked by the other mostly white and native English pupils. A spokesman at Forest

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[78] BBC, 'London Bomber: Text in Full', *BBC News Website*, 1 September 2005.

[79] J. Burke *et al.*, 'The London Bombs: Three Cities, Four Killers', *The Observer*, 7 July 2005.

[80] Home Office, 'Report of the Official Account of the Bombings in London on 7th July 2005', 2006, p. 26. Khan is a particularly good counter-example to the claim that individuals who go on to radicalise are alienated. Roy in particular cites as evidence for this the fact that they were not involved in community organisations. See Roy, 'A Clash of Cultures or a Debate on Europe's Values?'. Although Khan was not active in those organisations Roy notes – there are not that many young Beeston men in trade unions today – he was clearly involved, and felt he had a stake, in community affairs.

[81] Gunning, 'Terrorism, Charities and Diasporas', p. 106.

described him as a model student, 'a good all-round, solid and very support-ive pupil'. After three years in Pakistan, where he attended Aitchison col-lege, a school favored by the Pakistani elite, Sheikh returned to Forest. His peers admired him for his good humor and strength – he had become a member of the British arm-wrestling squad, and he was always ready to show off against other students.[82]

Sheikh was both privileged and integrated, with precious few signs of alienation. However, he went on to fight in Bosnia and kidnap in Kashmir. He is currently awaiting execution for involvement in the brutal murder of *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl.[83]

A co-conspirator of Richard Reid, Sajiid Badat, withdrew from a plot to blow up a transatlantic plane a few days before the plan was due to be executed. In the view of two analysts, Badat was another 'poster boy for integration'.[84] Even after his conviction, few voices could be heard dissenting from the opinion of his headmaster that Badat was 'well motivated and hard-working – a credit to his family and to the school'.[85]

Prior to moving on to London, Hussein Osman lived in Italy. His girlfriend there described how he

was obsessed with America. It was his dream. The music, Hip-hop. He dressed rapper-style. Trousers with a dropped crutch and a basketball vest. He drank alcohol: beer. Everyone knew he was a Muslim and a believer, but he never talked about it to me, nor did he have any problems going out with those of us who were not Muslims. It was just that he didn't eat pork.[86]

Osman is currently serving a life sentence for his part in a failed 2005 plot that targeted the London transport system.

Such examples are far from an exhaustive list. They are a stark illustration that despite the term's prevalence, and regardless of which version of alienation is chosen, there are considerable numbers to whom

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[82] Vidino, *Al Qaeda in Europe: The New Battleground of International Jihad*, pp. 39–40.
[83] BBC, 'Profile: Omar Saeed Sheikh', *BBC News Website*, 12 July 2002. His role in the murder remains unclear, not least with Khalid Sheik Mohammed's confession that he killed the reporter.
[84] M. Honigsbaum and V. Dodd, 'From Gloucester to Afghanistan: The Making of a Shoe Bomber', *The Guardian*, 5 March 2005.
[85] *Ibid.*
[86] J. Hooper, 'Suspect Was a Roman Romeo in Love with US', *The Guardian*, 2 August 2005.

it would not obviously apply. There may be individuals who it may be argued meet specific criteria of alienation – Richard Reid and Mohammed Bouyeri are two oft-cited examples, and there are likely to be several more.[87] That is to be expected. In any movement there are diverse backgrounds, personalities and characters. However, those who seek to characterise the entire collective based on the selection of a few individuals are rarely afforded such credence in other fields of study. Indeed, it is precisely such claims that contribute to terrorism studies being marked by standards 'that would not meet minimum research standards in the more established branches of conflict and policy analysis'.[88] If claims are going to be made that alienation is a significant factor in militant Salafism, surely it is incumbent upon those making such claims to produce some substantive evidence in support of this claim. This is sorely lacking.

Voice of protest

Alienation is considered important by those using it in the study of militant Salafism because the militancy is felt to offer resolution for the predicament of some alienated individuals. As a result, militant Salafism is viewed only as a voice of protest whose ideology and claims are of little importance. Again, this conviction owes much to an implicit commitment to an alienated subject, a Cheshire-cat logic.

According to this approach, we can ignore the individual's professions of religious conviction, and political grievances. This is what Buruma does, arguing that 'even though the modern terrorist has latched onto a religious faith, he might as well have chosen – and in different times did choose – a radically secular creed to justify his

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[87] It should be noted that there are strong dissenting voices to the notion that even Bouyeri was disadvantaged and excluded. As one journalist wrote: 'Aside from the social worker he refused to see, he appeared to be surrounded by well meaning professionals. He sat on a committee for a new youth centre, and even visited the Dutch parliament to argue its merits. Civil servants consulted him on how to improve relations between Moroccan youth and the police, after a series of riots in 1998; he was involved in local authority planning decisions; as late as 2002 he took a course in social work; and he enjoyed a position of influence at the community centre in Eigenwijks.' See A. Anthony, 'Amsterdamned, Part One', *The Guardian*, 5 December 2004.

[88] T. Gurr, 'Empirical Research on Political Terrorism: The State of the Art and How It Might Be Improved', in R. Slater and M. Stohl (eds.), *Current Perspectives on International Terrorism*. London: Macmillan, 1988, p. 143.

thirst for violent death'.[89] The cause is immaterial. The explanation for militant Salafism is the same as most other violent movements. It appeals to individuals whose militancy constitutes 'a confession of irreversible smallness'.[90] The 'appeal of Islamic fundamentalism in particular is thus understood in functionalist terms, that is, by reference to its efficacy as a channel for…discontent'.[91]

Such approaches ignore the content of militant Salafist ideology in favour of a pathologising of those who espouse it. Morality is reduced to instrumentalism alone. However, as Euben writes: 'Although it is certainly true that ideas are often adopted and discarded for a variety of reasons, including instrumental ones, religious convictions…are far too complex to be either reduced to an option in the marketplace of ideas or minimized as a refuge that provides emotional peace and comfort.'[92] Militant Salafism, as any study of its principal theorists will support, can offer a vision that is articulate and coherent.[93] Its violence, intolerance and discrimination may be unpalatable, but that does not mean that it is necessarily reducible to the ideologically irrelevant recourse of the angry and alienated.

Broader applicability

I have briefly tried to tease out what analysts and commentators understand by alienation. Others may prefer to offer multiple interpretations and/or broaden and loosen the understanding of the concept.[94] However, such elasticity does not rescue the idea. If the scope is sufficiently broad, or the notion of alienation allows for the inclusion of a variety of meanings, the problem would no longer be too few militants who might be judged alienated, but that alienation would

[89] Buruma, *Murder in Amsterdam*, pp. 32–3.
[90] C. Robin, *Fear: The History of a Political Idea*. Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 100.
[91] R. Euben, *Enemy in the Mirror: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Limits of Modern Rationalism*. Princeton University Press, 1999, pp. 26–7. This encapsulates an approach with which Euben takes issue, and not her own position. In fact she is one of those who take as real that militant Salafist thought merits real intellectual engagement.
[92] *Ibid.* p. 48.
[93] See for example S. Qutb, *Milestones*. Delhi: Islamic Book Service, 2006.
[94] See for example Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, p. 98, and Vidino, *Al Qaeda in Europe*, pp. 26–38.

now affect far more people than turn to militancy. There are enormous numbers of people who, as a result of such a definitional promiscuity or broadening, could reasonably be described as alienated, something only compounded when it is unclear from whom or what that alienation is held to be.

The customary defence is that the alienation thesis is insufficient on its own to explain why radicalisation occurs, but it nonetheless remains an important contributing factor. Thus Khosrokhovar refers to the narrative of global Muslim suffering, Sageman to the role of the group and Roy to the appeal of Islam/militant Salafism as a statement of rebellion. Alienation thus becomes but one ingredient in the militant cake, often necessary, unlikely sufficient. However, the claim that there is probably some notion of alienation that is a factor to an unspecified degree in the lives of militants and many others, is not one likely to tell us much about militant Salafists. Certainly, if the term is to be broadly conceived, writers using it must be far more circumspect as to the work it does in analysing militancy. As Schacht notes, if

the breadth of application of the term 'alienation' cannot be markedly reduced, the capacity in which it is understood to function must be altered. For the only capacity in which this breadth of application leaves it capable of functioning at all usefully is that of a general term, which marks out a wide range of types of dissatisfaction, disharmony and disaffection sharing the feature of deriving from or involving feelings of 'alienness' of some sort.[95]

And this leads to a wider philosophical point. Alienation is a highly nuanced, complex and fluid state. It exists in degrees – different in constitution and depth in different people and in the same person at different times. To say one is alienated is shorthand for something far more complex. If it is to be usefully applied in this or any analysis, that complexity must both be appreciated and reflected. This is a profoundly difficult task, one that is certainly not met in the militant Salafist literature. Instead, underlying these alienation accounts is a presumption of an idealised non-alienated state, a wholly perfect white world, in contrast to a wholly imperfect black one. Within this world of dichotomous emotions, militancy offers the opportunity for one to cross from the latter state to the former. The problem with this

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[95] R. Schacht, *Alienation*. London: Allen and Unwin, 1971, pp. 195–6.

can be illustrated if we try to imagine what this fortunate, non-alienated individual might look like. As Walter Kaufmann asks, 'Would a non-alienated person find no group of people, no individuals, nothing about the society in which he lived strange in any way at all? If so, could one really call him a person? And if one did, would one not have to add that his condition was severely pathological and bordered on idiocy?'[96]

In the literature on militant Salafism, the notion of alienation is employed with a determination that belies a dearth of evidence and definitional confusion. It also tends to circumvent the central puzzle of militant Salafism. This is not the choice of terrorism, which is relatively common across time and place. Rather, it is how it was that those individuals who are part of the movement came to view the world in the way they did, one that rendered terrorism not only an option, but the appropriate one. More specifically, the crucial question is how they came to view themselves as militant Salafists.

This leads to a final criticism of these approaches, as well as an indication as to how the phenomenon may more usefully be analysed. Deficient attention is paid within existing literature on militant Salafism to the role of the political imaginary. This is a crucial element in the tale of militancy, the way in which individuals reinvent themselves in a radically different manner often in a very short space of time. Militant Salafism depends upon the reduction of overlapping forms of identity in favour of one that dominates all others[97] – that of a Muslim whose community is threatened by those who are fundamentally and necessarily opposed to Islam and its adherents. An examination of the exercise of the political imaginary has the potential to reveal a great deal about this process. However, it, and the structures that facilitate it, remain under-explored in the context of militant Salafism.

Tololyan wrote that 'The persistence of the model of the individual terrorist as an alienated Western youth is remarkable, and not without serious consequence.'[98] He is absolutely correct. It is remarkable

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[96] Introduction in Schacht, *Alienation*, p. xxiv.
[97] This is what Amartya Sen terms 'the miniaturization of human beings': A. Sen, *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny*. London: Allen Lane, 2006, p. 185.
[98] K. Tololyan, 'Cultural Narrative and the Motivation of the Terrorist', in D. Rapaport (ed.), *Inside the Terrorist Organization*. London: Frank Cass, 2001, p. 220.

because it often owes more to the assumptions of those writing on the topic than it does to sustained analysis or empirical investigation. The consequences are serious in impeding an accurate understanding of the phenomenon and, with such a topical issue, contributing to questionable policy-making decisions. The question remains as to what a preferable alternative would look like.

3 | *Taking us everywhere: the role of the political imaginary*

Militant Salafism is a movement of thousands of individuals from diverse backgrounds who claim a unity of both identity and purpose. Most of those militant Salafists living in the West have a tangential relationship, at best, with the Muslim world for which they claim to be fighting. To understand militant Salafism we must understand how this very particular political imaginary, one detailed in Chapter 1, was possible.

There are others who have explored the idea of the political imaginary in the context of militant Salafism, including some of the finest scholars in the area. Sageman, for example, discusses the reasons for an 'attraction to a violent abstract global movement based on virtual ties to a virtual community'.[1] In so doing he points to the fact that those who radicalise are claiming ties to a movement that has little concrete reality. Tibi refers to this virtual community as the 'imagined *umma*'.[2] Khosrokhavar dedicates a chapter to the topic of the imaginary politics of militant Salafism,[3] as Cesari does two, including explicit reference to the notion of the political imaginary.[4] Olivier Roy takes one chapter to address militant Salafism and its appeal to Muslims and in particular those in the West. There he discusses the significance of deterritorialisation and a subsequent re-Islamisation that can produce allegiance to an imagined community, and provides some very important insights.[5] Finally here, Peter Mandaville has written the highly insightful, although theoretically complex, *Transnational Muslim Politics: Reimagining the Umma*, within which the

[1] Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, p. 151.
[2] B. Tibi, *Political Islam, World Politics and Europe: Democratic Peace and Euro-Islam Versus Global Jihad*. New York: Routledge, 2008, p. xiii.
[3] Khosrokhavar, *Suicide Bombers*.
[4] J. Cesari, *Islam and Democracy Meet: Muslims in Europe and in the United States*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001.
[5] Roy, *Globalized Islam*, pp. 18–20 and 272–5.

political imaginary is considered in greater depth. These are all welcome contributions, but many tend only to touch on the idea of the political imaginary, ignore the context within which it operates, and offer only a partial analysis of the particular forces that give rise to the militant Salafist version. These are the tasks of much of the remainder of this book. First of all, it is important to detail precisely what is meant by the political imaginary.

The political imaginary

Arjun Appadurai has written at some length on the political imaginary and its particular significance in political life today. He argues that we should be turning our attention

to something new in global cultural processes: the imagination as a social practice. No longer mere fantasy (opium for the masses), no longer simple escape (from a world defined principally by more concrete purposes and structures), no longer elite pastime (thus not relevant to the lives of ordinary people), and no longer mere contemplation (irrelevant for new forms of desire and subjectivity), the imagination has become an organized field of social practices, a form of work (in the sense of both labour and culturally organized practice), and a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility...The imagination is now central to all forms of agency, is itself a social fact, and is the key component of the new global order.[6]

Appadurai is certainly not the first to point to the role of the imaginary and its political importance. In his seminal work *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson described how the convergence of capitalism and print technology made it increasingly feasible, and therefore common, for people highly unlikely to have ever met, to imagine themselves as part of the same community.[7] This was despite them living distant and materially different lives. As he explains, 'print-capitalism ... made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think of themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in profoundly different ways'.[8] As Anderson's work details, this led to the

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[6] A. Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996, p. 31.

[7] B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1991.

[8] *Ibid*. p. 36.

development of the nation. He writes that the state 'is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion'.[9] The midwife of that imagined community so pervasive today, the modern nation state, was a combination of capitalism and print technology.[10] The logic of Anderson's approach, that alterations in underlying conditions can give rise to alternative political imaginaries, is one that is very useful in understanding militant Salafism today.

It is worth emphasising that the political imaginary is neither a flight of fantasy nor materially determined. Various conditions shape the way individuals see the world and identify themselves as part of it, but within those constraints there is choice. Each of us has a great array of possible identifiers, by no means limited to place of birth, skin colour, sexuality, gender, class, language, family lineage, profession, religion and political beliefs.[11] The weight an individual ascribes to each of these is a result of the interplay between the circumstances in which they find themselves and their own choices, the exercise of the political imaginary. The political imaginary represents not the escapism of the few but the political reality of the many, and is integral to the formation of numerous significant movements.

In turn, that political imaginary is shaped by conditions of possibility. In the case of Anderson and the nation state, a key condition of possibility was the advent of print technology. In its mass production of news in a 'national language', people could conceive of themselves as being French or German, and ascribe to others in distant locales a shared identity in a way that was previously impossible. As this book is concerned with the militant *ummah* rather than the nation state, the question becomes what factors are making it easier for individuals to adopt the militant Salafist imaginary? As we have seen, that political imaginary is one wherein s/he is a mujahideen acting in defence of Muslims worldwide, part of the same battle

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[9] *Ibid*. p. 6. Italics in original.   [10] *Ibid*. p. 46.
[11] Two of the best pieces of writing on identity are A. Sen, *Identity and Violence*. London: Allen Lane, 2006 and K. Booth, *Theory of World Security*. Cambridge University Press, 2007, esp. pp. 357–9. Both authors oppose the artificial, limiting and dangerous narrowing of the multiplicity of identities of all individuals. Another thoughtful account is M. Castells, *The Power of Identity*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1997.

waged by fellow fighters from Manchester to Mogadishu. Theirs is a political imaginary wherein apparently diverse global happenings are amalgamated and transported to local situations. This is made increasingly possible because of particular forces and conditions in the current era of globalised modernity.

Globalised modernity

The one constant in every time and place may well be that people of that period consider it to be one of great upheaval and transformation.[12] That ever-presence of change should caution against hyperbole, but it should not hide the significance of recent changes that have laid the foundation for the phenomenon of militant Salafism in the West.

Many of us today are exposed to a wealth of information from around the world every time we turn on our ubiquitous televisions and computers.[13] Individuals today have the opportunity to live, holiday and work in far-flung places. Even if they choose to remain close to their birthplace, they will be educated and employed alongside people who themselves are from elsewhere, or for whom in other ways movement is a very definite part of their lives. Events that, were they to have occurred a century earlier, would have passed by without their forefathers' knowledge, inform the conversations of today.[14] Of course, people have always moved, and information has for a very long time been transmitted thousands of miles. Nonetheless, we witness today profound changes whose scope, depth and impact are different from anything that has gone before.[15] Berman's description of this current flux is worthy of repetition:

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[12] See the superb M. Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air*. New York: Penguin, 1988, p. 15.

[13] As this work is concerned primarily with a phenomenon as it exists in economically wealthier countries, the all too common habit of ignoring people far less touched by various developments is for once justified.

[14] For a far more detailed examination of such changes, see T. Rantanen, *The Media and Globalization*. London: Sage, 2005.

[15] On that point, as Appadurai writes, 'Of course, many viewers may not themselves migrate. And many mass-mediated events are highly local in scope, as with cable television in some parts of the United States. But few important films, news broadcasts, or television spectacles are entirely unaffected by other media events that come from further afield. And few persons in the world today do not have a friend, relative, or coworker who is not on the road to

The maelstrom of modern life has been fed from many sources: great discoveries in the physical sciences, changing our images of the universe and our place in it; the industrialization of production, which transforms scientific knowledge into technology, creates new human environments and destroys old ones, speeds up the whole tempo of life, generates new forms of corporate power and class struggle; immense demographic upheavals, severing millions of people from their ancestral habitats, hurtling them half-way across the world into their new lives; rapid and often cataclysmic urban growth; systems of mass communication, dynamic in their development, enveloping and binding together the most diverse people and societies; increasingly powerful national states, bureaucratically structured and operated, constantly striving to expand their powers; mass social movements of people, and peoples, challenging their political and economic rulers, striving to gain some control over their lives; finally, bearing and driving all these people and institutions along, an ever-expanding, drastically fluctuating capitalist world market.[16]

In the midst of this upheaval, many writers have written on the dramatic shift in the relationship between space and time, and its effect on that between space and place.[17] These writings in turn were built on earlier writings. As early as the 1850s, Karl Marx 'anticipated "the annihilation of space by time" as "capital by its nature drives beyond every spatial barrier" to "conquer the whole earth for its market" . . . Likewise, Martin Heidegger at mid-century described the advent of "distancelessness" and an "abolition of every possibility of remoteness".'[18] Such assertions, particularly half a century ago, may have been premature, but only a little so. Much had already been achieved by then in dramatically altering the relationship between space and place.

The symbiotic relationship between time and place had meant that 'collective identities derived chiefly from relatively small-scale, comparatively isolated, and more or less autonomous localities . . . Only

somewhere else or already coming back home, bearing stories and possibilities': Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, p. 4.

[16] Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air*, p. 16.

[17] There has been some superb writing on this, including D. Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. London: Blackwell, 1991, esp. p. 25; J. Scholte, 'The Geography of Collective Identities in a Globalizing World', *The Review of International Political Economy* 73(3), 1996, p. 568; and A. Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity, 1991.

[18] Scholte, 'The Geography of Collective Identities in a Globalizing World', p. 572. See also Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air*.

small proportions of populations (e.g. certain clerics and aristocrats) regularly acted in a larger realm and identified themselves with a widely dispersed group of people.'[19] For the majority, territory defined people and thus politics. Today such parochialism is less and less common. As territorial considerations are more readily overcome, alternative identifications and political discourses that do not rest upon a shared location – or any location – become increasingly possible. Disembedding mechanisms are enjoying escalating influence, removing social and political activity from particular local contexts and reorganising and re-establishing them across far greater – often global – contexts.[20] As Giddens writes, whereas in pre-modern times,

the spatial dimensions of social life are, for most of the population, and in most respects, dominated by 'presence' – by localised activities . . . [t]he advent of modernity increasingly tears space away from place by fostering relations between 'absent' others, locationally distant from any given situation of face-to-face interaction. [Now, i]n conditions of modernity, place becomes increasingly *phantasmagoric*: that is to say, locales are thoroughly penetrated by and shaped in terms of social influences quite distant from them. What structures the locale is not simply that which is present on the scene; the 'visible form' of the locale conceals the distanciated relations which determine its nature.[21]

For Giddens, this is precisely what globalisation is, a phenomenon that 'refers essentially to that stretching process, in so far as the modes of connection between different social contexts or regions become networked across the earth's surface as a whole . . . Globalisation can thus be defined as the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa.'[22] Such conditions provide the opportunity for the political imaginary to function in a way that is indispensable to militant Salafism in the West.

Global forces

Of the conditions of possibilities that have had the most powerful effect on the militant Salafist political imaginary, two are particularly significant. They are movement and media. I am not the first to note

[19] Scholte, 'The Geography of Collective Identities in a Globalizing World', p. 568.
[20] See Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, p. 53.
[21] *Ibid*. pp. 18–19.   [22] *Ibid*. p. 64.

their centrality to political movements. Appadurai, for example, writes how the combined effects of greater levels of migration and the new electronic media have produced a new global environment in which new opportunities for the political imaginary are available. This helps to develop

a world in which both points of departure and points of arrival are in cultural flux, and thus the search for steady points of reference, as critical life choices are made, can be very difficult. It is in this atmosphere that the invention of tradition can become slippery, as the search for certainties is regularly frustrated by the fluidities of transnational communication. As group pasts become increasingly parts of museums, exhibits, and collections, both in national and transnational spectacles, culture becomes less what Pierre Bourdieu would have called a habitus (a tacit realm of reproducible practices and dispositions) and more an arena for conscious choice, justification and representation, the latter often to multiple and spatially dislocated audiences.[23]

These two conditions of possibility have considerably broadened the scope of the imaginary in global politics, and facilitated the particular one that is at the heart of militant Salafism. It is to them that we now turn.

Movement

The world is moving. British holidaymakers who have long since abandoned the beaches of Blackpool and Aberystwyth are now forsaking those of the Costa del Sol in favour of the sand and sun of Croatia and Australia; city breaks and stag nights have transformed Budapest and Tallinn, and the ski slopes of Bulgaria resound with English, German and Russian. Hundreds of thousands answer the call for a mobile global workforce. Filipino domestic servants proliferate in the Arab states; university students, as their lecturers did years ago, are increasingly seeing their choices of institution as global; prostitutes in Amsterdam's red light district (catering to a majority foreign population) are drawn from Eastern Europe, Latin America and South East Asia; and thousands of would-be migrants from sub-Saharan Africa journey north through the continent in search of a new life in Europe.

[23] Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, p. 44.

All the time new roads and airports, planes, cars, buses and ships are being built to meet the demand for ever more travel across ever greater distances.

It is of course possible to overstate the novelty of this movement, a phenomenon, even of large numbers and across great distances, which is by no means a late twentieth-/early twenty-first-century phenomenon. As Friedman writes, 'In the forty years from the 1880s about 30 million Europeans alone migrated to the United States and Australia. While total migration figures today are much larger, they are not larger as a percentage of the national populations involved.'[24] Nonetheless, there remains ample reason to include movement in an analysis of global politics today. First, the majority of the countries of the world continue to increase their foreign resident populations. This phenomenon is clearly identifiable in those parts of the world upon which this book focuses.[25] Quite simply, more people are moving. Secondly, there has been a globalisation of movement, a 'tendency for more and more countries to be crucially affected by migratory movements at the same time', as those greater numbers of people journeying do so from different places.[26] As they do, they herald unparalleled change to host communities. Thirdly, movement shapes politics not in isolation, but in tandem with other dynamics. Amongst these is media, which massively accelerates and amplifies the effects and reach of movement. If the individual cannot be brought to movement, movement will be brought to them. Vigilance in avoiding hyperbolic claims should not therefore disguise the reality that we live in a world of unprecedented movement. What we witness today is a burgeoning number of actors for whom boundaries and distance are nothing more than an inconvenience readily overcome. A key potential effect of this movement, with a tremendous bearing on political communities, is deterritorialisation.

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[24] J. Friedman, 'Globalization, Transnationalization and Migration: Ideologies and Realities of Global Transformation', in J. Friedman and S. Randeria (eds.), *Worlds on the Move: Globalization, Migration and Cultural Security*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2004, p. 65.

[25] S. Castle and M. Miller, *The Age of Migration*, 3rd edn. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003, p. 81.

[26] *Ibid*. p. 7.

Deterritorialisation

Deterritorialisation is the idea that people have been removed from a milieu in which there is a strong connection linking territory and people, a process that 'destabilises spatial boundaries'.[27] Movement helps to sever the link between people and place. Ideas and identities that were founded within the context of a specific locale must increasingly compete with those from elsewhere. For an increasing number of its citizens, the world today is one 'where social proximity is constructed over and in spite of geographic distance . . . where geographic proximity no longer leads *a priori* to social ties'.[28] Movement is undermining the reified position that territory holds, and in 'many ways, a "space of flows" is coming to dominate and transcend a "space of places" as the defining characteristic of postmodern world order'.[29] A new mobility is contributing towards a new international politics in which movement becomes more important than notions of territory.

Of course, deterritorialisation does not lead inevitably to support for deterritorialised causes. There are numerous examples of political movements that continue to emphasise the congruency between people and place, despite memberships that have experienced considerable movement. However, the greater movement of peoples allows for a greater fluidity in identity, a greater range of possibilities to which people are exposed and which may impact upon their political imaginary. Few phenomena illustrate this better than militant Salafism.

Militant Salafists tend to have experienced considerable movement in their lives, as is detailed in Chapter 5. It will be argued there that militant Salafists are overwhelmingly deterritorialised and that this lends itself to a deterritorialised vision without which militant Salafism could not easily exist. First though, we turn to the second key force – media.

(Hyper)media

Here the term media indicates hypermedia – electronically based, image-dominated, immediate, decentralised and interactive. Hypermedia is crucial to the militant Salafist in their accommodation of distant

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[27] M. DeLanda, *A New Philosophy of Society*. London: Continuum, 2006, p. 13.
[28] Cesari, *Islam and Democracy Meet*, p. 91.
[29] R. Deibert, *Parchment, Printing, and Hypermedia: Communication in World Order Transformation*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997, p. 175.

events into a worldview in which they occupy an important role. Led by the Internet, but including television, computer, cellphone, satellites and video cameras, hypermedia's main currency is images which form a near 'seamless web of digital-electronic-telecommunications'.[30] This image-heavy media comes to us in a 'torrent', saturating its recipients.[31] For a number of reasons, the advent of hypermedia offers a potentially profound impact on individuals and their political imaginary through an alteration of the relationship between space and place.

Destruction of space

Hypermedia has launched a further assault on distance, facilitating an immediacy of sustained communication between and within distant peoples. As Appadurai notes, 'given the problems of time, distance, and limited technologies for the command of resources across vast spaces, cultural dealings between socially and spatially separated groups have, until the past few centuries, been bridged at great cost and sustained over time only with great effort'.[32] Not so today.

Again, one of the main developments heralded by this 'annihilation of space through time' is a diminished importance of territory.[33] As with movement, this allows for easier membership of a community based upon something other than proximity. As Deibert writes in the context of hypermedia, 'geographical propinquity becomes less important as a basis for group identity as communities coalesce around shared interests in the "virtual" spaces of the hypermedia environment'.[34] Similarly, Meyrowitz notes that 'by severing the traditional link between physical location and social situation, for example, electronic media may begin to blur previously distinct identities by allowing people to "escape" informationally from

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[30] *Ibid*. p. 115.
[31] T. Gitlin, *Media Unlimited: How the Torrent of Images and Sounds Overwhelms Our Lives*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2001.
[32] Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, p. 28.
[33] Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, p. 205.
[34] Deibert, *Parchment, Printing, and Hypermedia: Communication in World Order Transformation*, p. 198.

place-defined groups and by permitting outsiders to "invade" many groups' territories without ever entering them'.[35]

There are several examples that illustrate this development. In a study of the Eritrean diaspora, and in particular its busiest website, www.dehai.org, Bernal notes that 'what cyberspace offers Eritreans in the diaspora is, through the ability of the Internet to bridge distance or at least render it invisible...[to make] physical location irrelevant'.[36] This is not an unusual experience. Because of their dispersion and the advent of hypermedia, many other diasporic communities 'may invent new forms of citizenship, community and political practices'.[37] The work of Bernal and others supports Meyrowitz's assertion that as 'we communicate through telephone, radio, television, or computer, where we are physically no longer determines where and who we are socially'.[38] Location may continue to be highly important in the provision of identity, but it is losing its position of privilege in doing so. Alternatives are presenting themselves. As actual territorial location becomes less significant, an imagined one becomes an increasing possibility: '*Where* one is now has less to do with *who* one is because where one is now has so little to do with what one knows and experiences.'[39]

Furthermore, hypermedia is highly accessible. In the age of hypermedia, many of us have considerable access to a tremendous range of media forms, an exponential increase from even the recent past. It is appropriate to note that the majority of the world still lacks access to the Internet or television. Nonetheless, they are a diminishing population. Further, in those cases where access is limited, the effect of hypermedia often still permeates. Individuals from countries where state control of the media is particularly severe, or where poverty precludes much of the technology on which hypermedia depends, may come into contact with others for whom it is less so. When Malaysian students study in French universities, Saudis visit business partners in Argentina, and Austrian aid workers are placed in Chad, hypermedia has an impact on and beyond those present. The ripples this causes may travel in unintended directions and across unexpected distances.

[35] J. Meyrowitz, *No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior.* Oxford University Press, 1986, p. 57.

[36] V. Bernal, 'Diaspora, Cyberspace and Political Imagination: The Eritrean Diaspora Online', *Global Networks* 6(2), 2006, p. 168.

[37] *Ibid.* p. 161.   [38] Meyrowitz, *No Sense of Place*, p. 115.

[39] *Ibid.* p. 158. Italics in original.

If we limit the examination to the West, the accessibility to hyper-media is clear. There are few people living there who do not have easy access to satellite television, DVDs and the Internet. Similarly, the obstacles to the production of films and Internet sites are increasingly readily overcome. Footage is made of Osama bin Laden, the world's most sought-after figure, presumed to be living in the technological hinterland of the Pakistani/Afghani border. It is then improved by a small US-headed team, before being broadcast to the world on an Arab-based satellite television network and subsequently repeated on countless shows and websites.[40] If this is possible in such inauspicious circumstances, there can be little doubt as to what can be achieved in more favourable conditions. In today's YouTube-savvy world we are all potential directors and actors. The democratisation of access is matched by the democratisation of production. Anyone armed with a video camera and computer can produce and transmit a film. Geographical boundaries to the production and consumption of today's media are increasingly porous.

Hypermedia also increases a specific kind of interaction. Consumers are able to select from a great range of 'news' sources. Further, the Internet offers actual interaction between consumers and producers. Indeed the Internet has massively blurred those lines, such that 'users in some sense create it as well as consume it as a medium'.[41] This is perhaps best exemplified by the profusion of chat forums on the Internet – something of which numerous movements, including militant Salafism, make great use.[42] Such interaction grants greater licence for individuals who may be geographically separate to replicate direct, personal interaction. Moreover, armed with anonymity, another array of obstacles to the exercise of the political imaginary may be overcome. It might be anticipated that the appearance and experiences of a young man in Leiden would set him apart from the Yemeni mujahideen trained in Afghanistan and battle-hardened in

[40] M. Ranstorp, 'The Virtual Sanctuary of Al-Qaeda and Terrorism in an Age of Globalisation', in J. Eriksson and G. Giacomello (eds.), *International Relations and Security in the Digital Age*. London: Routledge, 2007.
[41] Bernal, 'Diaspora, Cyberspace and Political Imagination', p. 171.
[42] See H. Rogan, 'Jihadism Online – a Study of How Al-Qaida and Radical Islamist Groups Use the Internet for Terrorist Purposes', *FFI/RAPPORT*, 2006.

Bosnia and Iraq. However, the anonymity he is accorded in cyberspace can overcome such differences. His self-projection, rather than his location or actions, can define him. In a world of interlinked hypermedia, stories of 'cyberjihadists' waging war from their own bedrooms become a distinct possibility.[43]

Images

Images dominate hypermedia. Sixteen years ago, Mitchell wrote that we live 'in a culture dominated by pictures, visual simulations, stereotypes, illusions, copies, reproductions, imitations, and fantasies'.[44] That is only truer today. Cultures in the West rely 'fundamentally on visuality for…[their] political bearings'.[45] Westerners, 'hyper-saturated with images, have developed a culture whose information, ideas and epistemology are given form by images in addition to and sometimes in place of the written and spoken word'.[46] There is every reason to take this change in the context and quantity of media exposure seriously. We are communicating more and more in images, and this is having a profound effect on the political discourses such communication produces. First, consider the extent to which we are in an image-dominated era.

In his study of images and the communicative changes they offer, Postman asks us to 'think of Richard Nixon or Jimmy Carter or Billy Graham, or even Albert Einstein, and what will come to mind is an image, a picture or a face, most likely a face on a television screen (in Einstein's case, a photograph of a face). Of words, almost nothing will come to mind. This is the difference between thinking in a word-centred culture and thinking in an image-centred culture.'[47] He is

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[43] See for example the story of Michael R, told by Benschop, 'Chronicle of a Political Murder Foretold', and that of Younes Tsouli in G. Corera, 'Al-Qaeda's 007', *The Times*, 16 January 2008.

[44] W. Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation*. Chicago University Press, 1994, p. 2.

[45] E. Dauphinée, 'The Politics of the Body in Pain: Reading the Ethics of Imagery', *Security Dialogue* 38(2), 2007, p. 153.

[46] S. Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2003, p. 105. See also F. Möller, 'Photographic Interventions in Post-9/11 Security Policy', *Security Dialogue* 38(2), 2007 for a very readable and thorough account of the importance of images and the need for analysts to take them seriously.

[47] N. Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*. New York: Penguin, 1984, p. 61.

surely correct. Such images may conjure up vague notions of some-
thing called a 'Theory of Relativity', or recollections of a political
intrigue known as 'Watergate', but amongst the majority of consumers
they will likely solicit little awareness of the meaning or content of
either. If we render the examples a little more contemporary and
geographically diverse, the point only becomes stronger. From the
Dalai Lama to Mother Theresa, Saddam Hussein to John Howard, it
is images that come to mind. This is despite the fact that these
individuals are public figures whose words and actions would, in the
pre-image-dominated world, have been their route to recognition.
Indeed 200 years earlier, the equivalents of such individuals would
have been able to walk the streets largely unrecognised. Their words,
however, would be widely known.[48]

Now consider the implications. Images tend to be accommodated
into existing narratives, rather than exercising substantive transforma-
tive powers. Images present an unanalysed, decontextualised snap-
shot. The recipient does not interact with them in the way they do
with a sustained written argument. They are more free-floating, to be
taken, understood and used not according to the facts of the argument
but rather according to the preferences of the consumer. They include
no historical perspective.[49] In the absence of continuity and context,
as Postman cites Terence Moran, 'bits of information cannot be inte-
grated into an intelligent and consistent whole'.[50] In a world where
images dominate, much can be made separate from or connected to
anything else. Images are able to 'perform a peculiar kind of dismem-
bering of reality, a wrenching of moments out of their contexts, and a
juxtaposing of events and things that have no logical or historical
connection with each other'.[51] As Appadurai comments: 'What they
offer to those who experience and transform them is a series of
elements (such as characters, plots and textual forms) out of which
scripts can be formed of imagined lives, their own as well as those of
others living in other places.'[52]

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[48] See *ibid*. esp. pp. 7, 46 and 61.
[49] For insightful writings on this, see J. Der Derian, *Virtuous War: Mapping the Military-Industrial-Media-Entertainment Network*. Boulder: Westview Press, 2001, and M. Shapiro, *Violent Cartographies: Mapping Cultures of War*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.
[50] Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, p. 137.
[51] *Ibid*. p. 74.   [52] Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, p. 35.

This is invaluable to the construction of a unified narrative from the stories of those living radically different lives in geographically disconnected locations. Images can help to engender a sense of belonging to a collective whose lives are disparate and distinct. Pieced together to form a story, they allow the consumer to accommodate both themselves and others into a pre-existing or developing narrative. The relevance to militant Salafism is likely already clear.

Movement and media represent the two key conditions that allow the political imaginary to have a greater role in political life today. They often work in conjunction with one another, and their interaction can be seen across the world. As 'Turkish guest workers in Germany watch Turkish films in their German flats, as Koreans in Philadelphia watch the 1998 Olympics in Seoul through satellite feeds from Korea, and as Pakistani cabdrivers in Chicago listen to cassettes of sermons recorded in mosques in Pakistan or Iran, we see moving images meet deterritorialised viewers'.[53] Media and movement are increasingly significant forces through which we conceive and reconceive of ourselves, and thus inform political life.

As people travel in ever-greater numbers and witness (images of) events and people from all parts of the world, the opportunities to identify with people and issues according to factors other than shared territory and experiences increase. In so doing, the distinction between global and local is increasingly blurred. Events and people from around the world are part of the narratives of people's lives in a way that earlier would have been both unimaginable and impossible.

Transnationalism – the global is local

The pervasion of movement and media makes it easier for transnational affinity to be established and maintained. This can take many forms, one of which is a particular type of ethnonationalism – a nationalism without borders, territory or face-to-face contact. In such cases individuals can and do imagine themselves significantly linked with others who subscribe to, or have ascribed to them, a kindred ethnonationalism, and order themselves and their actions accordingly. There are several good contemporary examples of this political imaginary predicated on the interaction between movement

[53] *Ibid.* p. 4.

and media. As Appadurai notes, 'Whether we consider the linkage of Serbs divided by large chunks of Bosnia-Herzegovina, or Kurds dispersed across Iran, Iraq and Turkey, or Sikhs spread through London, Vancouver and California, as well as the Indian Punjab, the new ethnonationalisms are complex, large-scale, highly coordinated acts of mobilisation, reliant on news, logistical flows, and propaganda across state borders.'[54]

One example demonstrating the profound impact of movement and media on transnational violence is the militant Khalistani movement. Meaning 'land of the pure', Khalistan is the name given to a region of what is currently India that some Sikhs wish to establish as a Sikh homeland. Theirs is a demand for the sovereignty of a people, defined by their religion, in the face of alleged persecution by the Indian state and its majority Hindu population. It is those members of the Sikh diaspora who support the cause who are particularly illuminating here. They are unlikely to have experienced the actions against which they inveigh, and which circulated images of torture and killing are held to represent. Indeed they are unlikely to have met any who have. Yet a firm and particular imagination of themselves as a part of a conflict is asserted. As one observer explains, 'Although it is not empirically true that all Sikhs "experience" the violent conflicts between Khalistanis and the Indian nation-state, disparate Sikh subjects have nevertheless been constituted globally through torture and the production of knowledge about that torture.'[55] Indispensable in the dissemination of that knowledge is hypermedia and its projection of images. As Axel writes: 'In the past fourteen years, pictures of the mutilated corpses of Sikh men have become a well-known – and singularly important – sight for most Sikhs living around the world.'[56] These pictures, presented on sites such as www.khalistan.net, present a powerful image of suffering from which the readers are invited to conclude that the Indian state is implacably hostile. The images allow individuals from Canada, Europe and Australia, many of whom have neither visited the proposed Sikh nation nor shared in the suffering offered to them as a fact in the pictures, to take those elements and sew them into a coherent imagined life.

[54] *Ibid*. p. 163.
[55] B. Axel, 'The Diasporic Imaginary', *Public Culture* 14(2), 2002, p. 413.
[56] *Ibid*. p. 414.

Brian Axel asks how it was that some Sikhs overcame differences in experience and geography to consider themselves as part of the same community. What, he enquires, 'has emerged in the last 17 years that has made it possible for Sikhs all over the world to even conceptualize a "world-wide Sikh community" that would be capable of generating a mobilization that challenges both the Indian state and the normative institutions of the Sikh *quam*?'[57] The question he is posing is what social forces are facilitating a particular form of nostalgic politics?

A nostalgia without memory

The Sikh example is suggestive of a specific form of nostalgic politics, one that Jameson refers to as a 'nostalgia for the present',[58] and Appadurai as 'nostalgia without memory'.[59] The term nostalgia is derived from the Greek *nostos*, meaning to return home, and *algia*, meaning a painful condition.[60] Nostalgia, the recollection of a past that might be reclaimed and relived, is common to all societies. Such nostalgia may not be the result of entirely objective remembrances, but on the whole it is informed by the memory of directly experienced events. Even for those who have never actually known the referent object – the children of Rwandan refugees in Burundi, Turkish migrants in Germany, and the hyphenated multitudes in the United States – there is a reference point of something that has existed and continues to do so. That for which they are fighting, and that of which they feel a part, is usually seen as fairly static. This is one of the reasons why Irish Americans continued in their support for the IRA long after increasing numbers in Northern Ireland and certainly in the Republic considered it anachronistic. Even in such cases, however, nostalgia produces a different reality to that which is supposedly remembered. Hoskins makes this point in reference to a phenomenon in Germany. There, 'the former GDR is undergoing a renaissance in popular TV programming in the form of nostalgia, or "ostalgia" (*Ostalgie*) for the past, but one that is unrecognizable to many with

[57] B. Axel, 'Diasporic Sublime: Sikh Martyrs, Internet Mediations, and the Question of the Unimaginable', *Sikh Formations* 1(1), 2005, pp. 144–5.

[58] F. Jameson, 'Nostalgia for the Present', *South Atlantic Quarterly* 88(2), 1989.

[59] Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, p. 30.

[60] F. Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia*. New York: The Free Press, 1979, p. 1.

living memory of it'.[61] The Khalistan case points even further along this line of nostalgic politics. This is one directed not towards something that existed and is remembered through generations. Rather it is a nostalgia for an imagined politics, only elements of which may have been a reality and even these not experienced by the Sikh diaspora. This politics is given life through the imagination and actions based upon it. So it is too with militant Salafism.

Militant Salafism and the politics of nostalgia

The militant transnational Khalistani example has much in common with the militant Salafist movement. Some from the Sikh diaspora reimagine themselves as a member of an international Khalistani Sikh community (and not simply as a Sikh), standing in opposition to the Indian state. For militant Salafists, the reconfiguration is of a member of the *ummah* in opposition to a hostile West. Applying Axel's question to the militant Salafist movement, it becomes: 'What has enabled Muslims in the West to imagine themselves as part of a world-wide Muslim community that is threatened by the West?' How was it possible that a specific imagined self as a part of an imagined community (the global *ummah*) arose? What are the global sociological forces that facilitate such a political imaginary? The answer has much to do with the media and movement in the production of a politics of nostalgia that depends upon something other than direct experience. Indeed this is even more the case with militant Salafism than it is for the Khalistani example. Whilst in the latter there is a desire to establish a homeland in a definite area and in which fellow campaigners live, this is not so obviously the case with militant Salafists. There, deterritorialisation lends itself to an even more deterritorialised notion of political community.

That militant Salafism is a product of the political imaginary is not to argue that the *ummah* is a work of fiction. The *ummah*, central to the militant Salafist project, is the result of a political imaginary of a nostalgia without memory. It demands a little more explanation.

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[61] A. Hoskins, 'Television and the Collapse of Memory', *Time and Society* 13(1), 2004, p. 110.

The ummah

Many believers may take umbrage at the idea of the *ummah* as a work of the imagination.[62] This is not least because of the Koranic injunction that Muslims should be concerned for all believers – that it is belief, not location or experience that matters. Islam has always had global aspirations – a religion for all humans for all time – and the *ummah* is neither an innovation of militants nor a concern only they hold strongly. An assertion of the belief in Islam as being of paramount importance, and of the primacy of the *ummah* as a source of identification, has been a common position in Islam's various strands since it came into being. Theoretically at least, the notion of a body of believers sharing something far greater than that on which they differ has been accepted by swathes of Muslims for 1,500 years.[63]

The idea that the *ummah* is characterised as a function of the imagination should therefore be made explicit. It is being used in the same way as Anderson does with the nation state. The *ummah* is a multitude of people whose paths will never cross and who share few direct experiences with others within it. It is given life only through people's belief that it exists. The *ummah* is thus a work of the political imaginary, as much a 'mythical conception' as 'the West', to which it is claimed to be in opposition.[64] In one way or another, this point is made amongst others by Khosrokhavar, Roy, Cesari and Tibi.[65]

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[62] It is worth noting that different people will hold quite different conceptions of an *ummah*. The notion of Muslims and an *ummah* as a global community uniting its members is reduced in the hands of militants from one of believers, to narrowly defined righteous believers. Their imagined *ummah* has no place for either the Shi'a, attacked whilst observing religious ceremonies in Iraq, or for the secularised Turks. It extends only to those who think and act similarly to themselves. On the whole, militant Salafists do not have a concern with all Muslims, but only with those whose actions, or whose experience of the actions of others, appear to confirm the idea of a battle between Islam and the West.

[63] See for example K. Armstrong, *Islam: A Short History.* New York: Modern Library, 2002. Another account – brief but informative – is A. Dallal, 'Ummah', in J. Esposito (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World.* Oxford University Press, 1995.

[64] E. Husain, *The Islamist.* London: Penguin, 2007, p. 278.

[65] This should actually elicit little controversy, for all communities are, to some extent, imagined, as Strathern and Whitehead note. See A. Strathern, P. Stewart, and N. Whitehead (eds.), *Terror and Violence: Imagination and the Unimaginable.* London: Pluto Press, 2006, p. 9. They are given life through an imagination that is then acted upon. Of that most prevalent of imagined communities of recent times, the state, Walzer writes that it 'is invisible; it must

The worldview upon which militant Salafism is based depends upon the exercise of the political imaginary. That in turn depends upon conditions of possibility in an era of globalised modernity. Key amongst these conditions are movement and media. These are the subjects of the following two chapters.

be personified before it can be seen, symbolized before it can be loved, imagined before it can be conceived'. See M. Walzer, 'On the Role of Symbolism in Political Thought', *Political Science Quarterly* 82, 1967, p. 194. So it is too for the *ummah*.

4 | *(Hyper)media and the construction of the militant community*

The political imaginary plays a crucial role in the process by which individuals come to conceive of themselves as militant Salafists. In turn, this is constructed in large part on two key conditions of possibility – movement and media. Both serve as vehicles of both dislocation and relocation, facilitating the very specific militant Salafist political imaginary. It is media that is considered now.

Few would argue that the role of the Internet – the vanguard of today's media – has been ignored in the study of political violence.[1] However, studies addressing the relations between the two have tended to concentrate on the Internet's functional application as a tool to militants. This is useful, but such an emphasis comes at the expense

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[1] Some of the many examples of writing on the two are E. Ahrari, 'Al-Qaeda and Cyberterrorism', *The Asia Times*, 18 August 2004; E. Alshech, 'Cyberspace as a Combat Zone: The Phenomenon of Electronic Jihad', *The Jerusalem Post*, 27 February 2007; I. Ariza, 'Virtual Jihad', *Scientific American*, 26 December 2005; S. Atran, 'A Failure of Imagination (Intelligence, WMDs, and "Virtual Jihad")', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 29, 2006; S. Coll and S. Glasser, 'Rifles and Laptops Al-Qaeda's New Armoury', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 August 2005; E. Kohlmann, 'The Real Online Terrorist Threat', *Foreign Affairs* 85(5), 2006; B. Lia, 'Al-Qaeda Online: Understanding Jihadist Internet Infrastructure', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 2005; Y. Musharbash, 'How Islamic Extremists Are Turning the Web into Terror.Com', *Der Spiegel*, 7 February 2005; Y. Musharbash, 'The Cyber-Cemetery of the Mujahedeen', *Der Spiegel*, 28 October 2005; Y. Musharbash, 'Jihad 101 for Would-Be Terrorists', *Der Spiegel*, 17 August 2006; H. Rogan, 'The London Bombings.com: An Analysis of Jihadist Website Discussion about the Attacks', *FFI/RAPPORT*, 2005; H. Rogan, 'Jihadism Online – a Study of How Al-Qaida and Radical Islamist Groups Use the Internet for Terrorist Purposes', *FFI/RAPPORT*, 2006; S. Ulph, 'A Guide to Jihad on the Web', *Terrorism Focus* 2(7), 2005; G. Weimann, *Terror on the Internet: The New Arena, the New Challenges*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2006; J. Arquilla and D. Ronfeldt, 'The Advent of Netwar (Revisited)', in J. Arquilla and D. Ronfeldt (eds.), *Networks and Netwars*. Santa Monica: RAND, 2001; and G. Bunt, *Islam in the Digital Age: E-Jihad, Online Fatwas and Cyber Islamic Environments*. London: Pluto Press, 2003.

of an exploration of its transformative possibilities. There have also been a number of works on the ever-greater role of the global media more generally, many of which are extremely sophisticated and insightful.[2] Of more specific relevance to this study, several enquire into the relationship between political communication and images in an era in which hypermedia increasingly informs political life. This recognition that questions of politics are significantly impacted by electronic media is a welcome one. The increase in the reach, accessibility, immediacy and content of this latest technological intrusion into our lives has developed alternatives in terms of the constructions of identity and politics. An appreciation of this change is indispensable for properly understanding the phenomenon of militant Salafism.

To explore media and its role in facilitating militant Salafism, this chapter is divided into two parts. The first considers a number of cases of militant Salafism in the West and their use of electronic media. Whilst only a small proportion of what might have been included, it is sufficient to illustrate the prevalence and power of media in the lives of militants. The second part provides an analysis of that use of the media in the production of a political imaginary.

Western militant Salafism and hypermedia

Hofstad group

The 'Hofstad group' was named by the Dutch secret service in reference to The Hague, the city in which the group originally began to meet. Largely made up of second-generation Dutch of Moroccan background, it was loose, haphazard and contingent.[3] The group

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[2] See for example Der Derian, *Virtuous War*; M. Ignatieff, *Virtual War: Kosovo and Beyond*. London: Chatto and Windus, 2000; C. Dauber, 'Image as Argument: The Impact of Mogadishu on U.S. Military Intervention', *Armed Forces and Society* 27(2), 2001; Dauphinée, 'The Politics of the Body in Pain: Reading the Ethics of Imagery'; Hoskins, 'Television and the Collapse of Memory'; A. Hoskins, 'Temporality, Proximity and Security: Terror in a Media-Drenched Age', *International Relations* 20(4), 2006; E. Comor, 'The Role of Communication in Global Civil Society: Forces, Processes, Prospects', *International Studies Quarterly* 45, 2001.
[3] R. Peters, 'Interview with Author', 24 September 2007.

entered the public consciousness when one of its members, Mohammed Bouyeri, murdered Theo van Gogh as he biked to work. In accordance with his self-ascribed role as a provocateur, van Gogh had issued various insulting remarks about numerous individuals, groups and beliefs, Islam included. Indeed, shortly before his death he had teamed up with the politician Ayaan Hirsi Ali to make a film entitled *Submission* – a controversial movie, but by no means exceptionally so for van Gogh.[4] In the film, a naked female body has sections of the Qur'an written over it. Ali and van Gogh argued that the film was intended to draw attention to the misogyny of Islamism. Such activities excited considerable ire amongst many Dutch Muslims, and hostility was widely expressed, particularly in less public forums.[5] Since the prosecution of Bouyeri, who had hoped the Dutch police would grant him his wish for martyrdom, many of the activities and plans of members of the Hofstad group have come to light. These include plots for further attacks, and links with militants in other countries.[6] The killing of van Gogh may have pushed them into the limelight, but their history and intentions were more extensive than that one incident.

Hypermedia played a central role in the militancy of the members of the Hofstad group. It did so in a number of different forums in which the members participated, and communities of which they were a part, including group meetings, interactions through the Internet amongst Hofstad group members and amongst a wider militant community within the immigrant 'dish cities' (a term coined because of the large numbers of satellite dishes there, that receive news from overseas broadcast to immigrant communities).

Members of the Hofstad group would meet twice weekly. Originally this was in a phone centre in Schiedam, in the south of the country. Later they moved to Bouyeri's house, where the living room served as a classroom and housed the pulpit. In these meetings

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[4] Ali is a Somali-born critic of Islamism, a position that obliged her to live undercover, threatened by the Hofstad group and other militants as an apostate and enemy of Islam.

[5] Benschop, 'Interview with Author', 24 September 2007. That is not to argue that the plot to kill van Gogh was a result of *Submission*. The attack was discussed by the group and decided upon by Bouyeri before the film was made public.

[6] P. Nesser, 'Jihad in Europe – a Survey of the Motivations for Sunni Islamist Terrorism in Post-Millennium Europe', *FFI/Rapport*, 2004, pp. 12–14.

sermons were delivered by Redouan al-Issa, who played a key role in the early days of the group. When he was absent, Mohammed Bouyeri assumed responsibility.[7] In addition to embracing the teachings of al-Issa and Bouyeri and discussing issues amongst themselves, the Hofstad group also used to watch films purportedly demonstrating the persecution of Muslims throughout the world. Amongst these, footage from Chechnya and Iraq was particularly prevalent. There was also a preoccupation with recordings of beheadings.[8] Such films and clippings were so central to the meetings that many members would bring laptops when they met. On these they would watch material downloaded from Islamist websites, sites that

showed executions in the Middle East, foreign infidels having their throats cut by holy warriors wrapped in scarves and balaclavas. Mohammed, according to a man who attended these sessions, got visibly excited by these grisly spectacles. Nouredine[9] spent his wedding night on a mattress in Mohammed's apartment, together with his bride, watching infidels being slaughtered.[10]

After the murder of van Gogh, police raided Bouyeri's apartment. There they found a

CD-ROM disc … with video film of more than twenty-three killings of 'the enemies of Allah', including the *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl. These were taken from a Saudi website edited in London. Apart from detailed images of men of various nationalities being beheaded, the CD contained pictures of a struggling man slowly having his head sawed off, taken from a Dutch porn site.[11]

It was not only in face-to-face meetings that hypermedia exerted a significance. As the twenty-first century was ushered in, Islamist websites in the Netherlands had been established abroad and were concerned largely with events overseas. Aiming at a specific constituency, Arabic was the lingua franca and the Middle East was the focus. In 2001 there was a shift in perspective: 'Sites appeared that were specifically against the Netherlands or that had been set up by

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[7] Peters, interview with author.
[8] E. Vermaat, 'Terror on Trial', *Front Page Magazine*, 12 December 2005.
[9] Nouredine el Fatmi was an illegal immigrant in the Netherlands who shared a house and membership of the Hofstad group with Bouyeri.
[10] Buruma, *Murder in Amsterdam*, p. 212.   [11] *Ibid*. p. 4.

Dutch jihadists, albeit still with a foreign orientation.'[12] This situation continued to evolve. In 2003 the Netherlands experienced a surge in interest in militant Salafism on the Internet. Several sites were focused almost exclusively on bringing violent jihad to the Netherlands, and displayed little variation in terms of content. As Joustra writes, the 'content of the various MSN groups and sites…appeared in many respects to be similar to each other'.[13] The Hofstad group was at the vanguard of these changes.

The group ran an Internet community within which films, translations and information – 'snatches of revolutionary texts, calls for jihad, glorifications of martyrdom'[14] – could be shared. This was done through an MSN group that was set up and controlled by one if its members, Ahmed Hamdi.[15] He was also the IT expert to whom other group members would turn for technological help and security from the prying eyes of the authorities.[16] Because of their intimacy with one another, and because of the presence of a gatekeeper who vetted membership, this Internet community was the electronic mirror of the living-room meetings. The same activities were undertaken by the same known individuals. Texts were translated and distributed, conflict footage exchanged and threatening letters to key Dutch political figures drafted.[17]

The Hofstad group neither demanded nor received exclusive loyalty from its members. It was not the only militant group in the Netherlands, and many members were involved with other groups of militants, often loose coalitions who came together in Internet chat rooms. The best way to conceive of the militant milieu in the Netherlands in the early twenty-first century is of several fluid and overlapping groups, all of whom shared some information and memberships, with members of the Hofstad group exerting particular influence in establishing the terms of debate and with a perceived willingness to act upon their words.[18]

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[12] T. Joustra, *Jihadis and the Internet*. The Hague: National Coordinator for Counterterrorism, 2007, pp. 58–9.

[13] *Ibid*. p. 60.   [14] Buruma, *Murder in Amsterdam*, p. 194.

[15] E. Vermaat, 'The "Hofstadgroup" Terror Trial', *Front Page Magazine*, 10 January 2006.

[16] Benschop, 'Chronicle of a Political Murder Foretold'.

[17] Buruma, *Murder in Amsterdam*, p. 194.

[18] See Joustra, *Jihadis and the Internet*, p. 33.

Bouyeri hosted an MSN group, *Muwahidin*. Hamdi's expertise was again utilised and he served as its webmaster.[19] Using his alias, Abu Zubair, Bouyeri wrote articles about (militant) Islam and translated texts of influential radical Islamist thinkers, including Mawdudi, the founder of Jamaat-e-Islami and Sayyid Qutb. He also referenced contemporary figures, including Omar Addur-Rahman, the 'blind sheikh' imprisoned for his role in the World Trade Center bombings in 1993, and Abu Hamza al-Masri, also now imprisoned. In addition he offered standard militant diatribes against the West, called for jihad to be waged in Iraq and for prominent Dutch figures to be killed.

Another member of the Hofstad group was Rashid Bousana. He spent much of his day in front of a computer visiting militant Salafist sites. Through these he sought to recruit others to the cause of militant Salafism, as well as to collect funds for the al-Aqsa Foundation in Rotterdam.[20] Then there was Bilal Lamrani. He actively recruited, both for the Hofstad group and for the wider violent Salafist cause. In doing so he also made much use of the Internet to convince others of the obligation to wage jihad and advice as to how they might do so.[21] In an MSN group he responded to the question as to whether one who abuses the prophet Mohammed should be punished by death. His answer was unambiguous: 'It is an obligation to kill he who abuses the Prophet whether he is Muslim or Kaafir. And Hirsi Ali and Theo van Gogh, these pigs who have abused the prophet their punishment is death and their day will come with Allah's will.'[22] On another occasion he wrote that:

Those who combat Muslims or support the combat of Muslims in any way are regarded as one joint enemy. And unfortunately the Netherlands hasn't learnt anything from the blessed attacks in Madrid . . . We Muslims accept

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[19] Benschop, 'Chronicle of a Political Murder Foretold'.
[20] *Ibid*. The 2002 AIVD annual report said that foundation money was transferred to Hamas to buy weapons and train suicide bombers. See the AIVD 'Annual Report 2002', ed. General Intelligence and Security Service, 2002. The foundation was outlawed in 2003.
[21] Benschop, 'Chronicle of a Political Murder Foretold'.
[22] The text he quotes, 'Verplichting van het doden van degene die de profeet uitscheld' ('Obligation to kill those who revile the prophet'), was from a collection of texts from a fourteenth-century document which had been translated by Mohammed Bouyeri in July 2004.

no humiliation!!...And Geert Wilders[23] and Hirsi Ali and the Dutch government, the Mujahidin are on their way. Oh, Allah, let our death resurrect the Ummah again...Amen.[24]

Lamrani personally maintained two MSN groups. Particularly prevalent in these were death threats against Mr Wilders.[25] Indeed this seems to have been something of a preoccupation for Lamrani. In January 2005 he edited a video which began with a pledge of support for Bouyeri and ended with the message: 'A small present for Geert Wilders. We have already sharpened our swords, dog.' The sounds of knives duly being sharpened provided the background.[26] When he was arrested for the first time, police found 140 pictures of Bin Laden on his computer.[27]

Two other members of the Hofstad group were Jason and Jermaine Walters, the sons of an American father and Dutch mother. At the age of sixteen, Jason converted to Islam with a convert's zeal, and pursued a militant interpretation shortly afterwards. Jermaine followed a similar trajectory. According to a familiar pattern, Jason made extensive use of the Internet. The content he engaged with was not dramatically different from those the others did – largely militant texts and war footage. In his case there are also records of discussions he had with other individuals. In one example a conversation took place between Jason and another unidentified participant. In it the two discuss what is permitted and directed by Islam. In this case the interpretation of these moral questions is that of Abdul-Jabbar van de Ven,[28] another convert and a preacher at a mosque in Eindhoven, In one forum, Walters asked whether (van de Ven's interpretation of) Islam would 'permit slaughtering the "kufaar"' and 'stealing their riches'. After a

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[23] Wilders is a conservative politician who has excited much hostility amongst many Dutch Muslims.
[24] Cited in Benschop, 'Chronicle of a Political Murder Foretold'.
[25] Joustra, *Jihadis and the Internet*, p. 64.   [26] *Ibid*. p. 73.
[27] Benschop, 'Chronicle of a Political Murder Foretold'.
[28] Van de Ven attracted considerable attention in the Netherlands for an interview in which he expressed the hope that the MP Geert Wilders would die within two years, and declared that Osama bin Laden was a 'brother' and that 'the Netherlands is a cancer'. See Anonymous, 'Dutch Imam Wants MP Geert Wilders to Die within Two Years', *Zacht Ei*, 23 November 2004. His later protestations that he was not authorised to issue fatwas and that his relationship with Jason was slight were generally dismissed. However, one person who knows both him and Walters better than most described him as the most apolitical Salafist he had ever met – Peters, interview with author.

subsequent meeting with the preacher, Walters excitedly told another anonymous chat room participant of the imam's authorisation of violence against the Dutch.[29]

Thus far the story has been about those who already accept militancy. However, it is not only committed followers who use the Internet – others do en route to militancy. Media often also proves crucial in the formative stages of militant Salafism. For example, upon release from a spell in prison, Mohammed Bouyeri immediately began using the Internet in his search for 'the truth'.[30] That was his first port of call. Indeed for Bouyeri, who was largely self-taught in Islam and the radical version he embraced, the majority of his knowledge 'came from English translations of Arabic texts downloaded from the Internet'.[31] In turn he sought to impart his own newly discovered wisdom through the Internet. Presumably his interest in Islam has been raised elsewhere, but that interest was first satiated by using the Internet.

Soumaya Sahla was another who made extensive use of the Internet in the early stages of her militancy. Sahla came from a Moroccan family in The Hague, but rejected their traditionalism for the very modern militant Salafism she pursued. As her views developed she began wearing a burqa. Her father tore it up. Learning of her plight (via the Internet), sympathisers ordered replacements and had them mailed to her home.[32] She was detained in Amsterdam at the same time as Nouredine el Fatmi and Martine van der Oeven, another Dutch convert. During her prosecution for terrorist offences she detailed how she regularly visited Internet cafés in Amsterdam and The Hague in an effort to acquire information concerning her burgeoning faith. Via the Internet she searched radical sites, including al-islaam, al-yaqeen and islamway.com.[33] She also chatted regularly with el Fatmi via MSN after he had established contact, impressed

[29] Benschop, 'Chronicle of a Political Murder Foretold'. On Walters' increasing militancy, see also K. Richburg, 'From Quiet Teen to Terrorist Suspect', *The Washington Post*, 5 December 2004.

[30] *Ibid*. See also the interview with Peters in CBC, 'Among the Believers: Cracking the Toronto Terror Cell', *CBC News Website*, 2006.

[31] Buruma, *Murder in Amsterdam*, pp. 3–4. See also L. Vidino, 'The Hofstad Group: The New Face of Terrorist Networks in Europe', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 30, 2007.

[32] J. Button, 'The Nowhere Generation', *The Age*, 31 December 2005.

[33] Benschop, 'Chronicle of a Political Murder Foretold'.

with her various Internet postings.[34] As with Bouyeri, it was to the Internet that Sahla turned in her pursuit of a radical interpretation of Islam. As far as is known she did not turn to a local figure or institution, but to the electronic media and all that it offers. Divorced from hypermedia, such a process would have been very difficult indeed. It was in large part because of hypermedia that Sahla could establish the links with other militants, in a way that a rollerblading woman born and raised in the Netherlands could conceive of herself as significantly linked with Afghani victims of US-led attacks.

Joustra reports a similar process in Samir Azzouz, a Dutchman born of Moroccan parents. He is currently in prison after a third prosecution on terrorism charges. The Dutch National Criminal Investigation Team was able to retrace the searches made on his computer and thus describe the key part played by the Internet in his radicalisation process.[35] For another example we might return to Bilal Lamrani. He described his growing interest in Islam and militancy, insisting 'I will not deny it. I am interested in the jihad. But eight months ago I wasn't religious at all. I knew very little about Islam. Someone mailed me: "If you consider yourself a Muslim, read this, and read that". And he sent me videos of the events in the Middle East and some books. I don't know who that person is. I get this sort of thing a lot on the internet.'[36] Finally here there is the story of Yahya K,[37] an eighteen-year-old student from Sas van Gent who was detained after making threats against Hirshi Ali and the AIVD (Dutch secret service). Joustra reports that: 'During his arrest he was found in possession of home-made explosives that he had assembled using knowledge derived from the internet. He had undergone the entire radicalisation process from in front of this computer screen in the virtual world.'[38]

The examples above illustrate the importance of the Internet to militant Salafists in the Netherlands. Other aspects of hypermedia

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[34] See *ibid.* and Joustra, *Jihadis and the Internet*, p. 65.

[35] Joustra, *Jihadis and the Internet*, p. 74. This finding has not been made widely available, but does confirm an important role for the Internet in the radicalisation of this key militant.

[36] Cited in Benschop, 'Chronicle of a Political Murder Foretold'.

[37] Dutch law prohibits the publishing of a defendant's full name. Mohammed Bouyeri, for example, was referred to for a long time as Mohammed B. Successful prosecution removes that injunction, which the difficulty in policing the Internet often nullifies in any case.

[38] Joustra, *Jihadis and the Internet*, p. 42.

are also significant and merit a mention here. In the case of Dutch militants, an important role is played by the 'dish/satellite cities'. Bouyeri, for example, 'grew up in a small apartment with his parents and three sisters in Slotervaart, a suburb on the western edge of Amsterdam . . . Locals call the neighbourhood Satellite City because alongside laundry flapping in the breeze, virtually every balcony has a satellite dish to receive Moroccan television and the Arabic news channel al-Jazeera.'[39] Many other of the militants grew up in areas with a heavy immigrant population, mostly in west Amsterdam, areas which earned the nickname 'dish cities' because of the profusion of satellite dishes that brought news from Turkey and Morocco.[40]

Because of the reach of hypermedia and developments within it, second-generation immigrants and recent arrivals could access news, footage and analysis of events in the Muslim world.[41] The advent of al-Jazeera and other similar satellite broadcasters brought information and developments from around the world to houses in Amsterdam suburbs. This helped to facilitate the imagination of an *ummah*, an entity given life by the projection of events from disparate parts of the world to living rooms in Amsterdam. Images from Rabat and beyond transmitted immediately to living rooms in Amsterdam brought the global to the local. Such a situation is not peculiar to the Netherlands.[42]

Remember that the political imaginings of Western militant Salafists today are not a nostalgia for a world they have left behind, but a reimagining of a world that they have not encountered, a world that does not exist beyond the collective imagination. Hypermedia is key in this, facilitating a political project that is disconnected from lived experience. The members of the Hofstad group had little concern with events in Morocco, the birthplace of most of their parents, except for when it fitted into a militant Salafist worldview as part of the

[39] G. Frankel, 'From Civic Activist to Alleged Terrorist', *The Washington Post*, 28 November 2004. See also Z. Shore, 'Can the West Win Muslim Hearts and Minds?', *Orbis* 49(3), 2005.

[40] Shore, 'Can the West Win Muslim Hearts and Minds?', p. 476.

[41] Amongst those aware of the value of such a resource is Ayman al-Zawahiri, who sought to jump on the broadcasting bandwagon by launching his own station. See L. Wright, *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11*. London: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006, p. 249.

[42] See A. Hargreaves, 'Satellite Viewing among Ethnic Minorities in France', *European Journal of Communication* 12(4), 1997.

existential battle between Islam and the West. Theirs were far more global concerns. They supported and tried to engage in attacks in Portugal,[43] Chechnya[44] and the Netherlands,[45] but beyond occasional criticisms of its royal family, Morocco was of little importance. Access to information and images from around the world was highly significant to their particular political imaginings.

Beeston

The men who attacked London's transport system on 7 July 2005 were from Yorkshire.[46] Tanweer, Khan and Hussain lived in Beeston, an area of Leeds within which the story of those attacks unfolds. It is within these few streets of terraced houses that the Iqra Islamic bookshop, the 'al-Qaeda gym' and the Hamara Youth Access Point can be found. All were frequented by the bombers. It was also in Beeston that the Mullah Crew operated.

Khan and Tanweer were key members of the Crew, a group with which both Lindsay and Hussain were involved. It consisted of a small group of men who sought to (re)turn local Muslims to a radical form of Islam. One of the main aspects of the group was the development and sharing of propaganda, and here too the impact of hypermedia was key. Hypermedia offered a vital route through which local Muslims reconceived of themselves as part of a far greater collective, facing the same problems for the same reasons. Previously demonstrating little interest in or awareness of the plight of the *ummah*, or religious injunctions to act in its defence, several, the bombers amongst them, came to be guided by just these concerns. The role of hypermedia in this transformation should not be underestimated.

Before they went on various trips organised by the Crew, the young men would watch extremely violent videos depicting Muslim suffering around the world. One of those who were part of the group, and who had participated in such sessions, offered the following description in a radio documentary:

[43] Anonymous, 'A Civil War on Terrorism', *The Economist*, 25 November 2004.
[44] S. Rotella, 'Europe's Boys of Jihad', *The Los Angeles Times*, 2 April 2005.
[45] C. Caldwell, 'Daughter of the Enlightenment', *The New York Times*, 3 April 2005.
[46] Lindsay moved there and then away shortly before the attack.

Before we would leave the house, there would sometimes be a video reflecting what's happening in Palestine or Chechnya or other places where Muslims were affected. Looking back on it now I do find it a bit weird that we had such a viewing. I can see why some youth would be affected by this – they get fired up, they get stirred up – and having the airing of that video might not have been in the best interests of certain people.[47]

The Iqra bookshop had back rooms. Relatively little is known about them, because few outsiders were invited in. One exception was Martin Gilbertson, hired to assist in establishing firewalls and designing websites. He describes how the rooms

consisted of a downstairs internet suite with four PCs linked to the web by broadband, a first-floor prayer room and storage room for a women's group that met there every Sunday afternoon; plus, on the second floor, an office for the Leeds Community School and a room containing a digital video editing suite. Iqra and the Leeds Community School were capable of producing their own videos and along with the computers, they had a multi-CD burner to produce large quantities of CDs and VCDs.[48]

Gilbertson offers an insight into the contents of the videos and websites on which he worked. The presentations on them included the usual montage of 'children in Iraq and the Palestinian territories mutilated or killed by American or Israeli forces'.[49] One 'opens majestically, with skilfully assembled sequences featuring a rising sun, a turning globe, set to sung verses from the Qur'an'. Another, entitled *Think Again*, re-edited a collection of images of violence in the United States. To the soundtrack of 'The Star Spangled Banner', the film ends with the first plane crashing into the World Trade Center. Yet another features President Bush voicing the word 'crusade' after 9/11 and then cuts to a history lesson about the Crusaders, 'an unholy tide of demons let loose upon the earth'. The presentation then moves to 'horrific images of mutilated, dismembered and slaughtered children in Iraq, the Palestinian territories and elsewhere'.[50] As Gilbertson

[47] BBC, '7 July Bomber's Motives Examined', *BBC News Website*, 17 July 2005.

[48] M. Gilbertson, '"When I Heard Where the Bombers Were from I Felt Sick"', *The Guardian*, 24 June 2006.

[49] Cited in E. Vulliamy, 'The IT Man Who Tried to Stop the 7/7 Bombers', *The Guardian*, 24 June 2006.

[50] *Ibid*.

asked: 'If these pictures can make me cry, what effect are they going to have on some impressionable Muslim youth?'[51] What indeed?[52]

London

Two weeks after the attacks on the London transport system on 7 July 2005, five men sought to replicate them. Muktar Said Ibrahim, Hussein Osman, Yassin Hasan Omar and Ramzi Mohammed all failed to detonate their explosives and fled the scene. Manfo Kwaku Asiedu abandoned the effort shortly beforehand. All five were apprehended in the ensuing days and all were subsequently convicted. Not a great deal is known as to the conditions under which their radicalisation occurred, or indeed their lives more generally. We do however know that Said Ibrahim (re)converted in prison and Osman after he arrived in London.[53] We also know something of the importance of the Internet and videos in the lives of those who intended to kill themselves and many others on the underground and buses of England's capital.

After the failed bombings the men fled. Osman returned to Italy. He was arrested there after police traced his mobile phone. Whilst in custody he told the Italian authorities how he had met Ibrahim at a basement gym in the Notting Hill area of London. Once Ibrahim had established that Osman was receptive to a particular ideology, he invited him to become part of a small group who discussed politics together. Discussions appear to have played a minor role in the gatherings. Together they watched hours of footage from the Iraqi conflict, an activity that instilled in the men 'a feeling of hatred and a conviction that it was necessary to give a signal – to do something'.[54] Osman is alleged to have explained that 'Religion had nothing to do with this. We watched films. We were shown

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[51] *Ibid.*
[52] This idea of the potential effect of such images was echoed in an interview the author conducted with Albert Benschop. He had examined hundreds of films watched by the Hofstad group as part of an analysis for the AIVD. He urged caution in following suit, as 'it puts you in the mindset of militants'. Benschop, interview with author.
[53] Travis and Gillian, 'Bomb Suspect "Became a Militant" in Prison'; Hooper, 'Suspect Was a Roman Romeo in Love with US'.
[54] M. Rai, '100 Days of Denial', *ZMag*, 16 October 2005.

videos with images of the war in Iraq. We were told we must do something big. That's why we met.'[55]

Madrid

On 11 March 2004, ten bombs exploded on morning commuter trains in Madrid. They killed 191 and left more than 1,500 injured.[56] Police later retrieved a videotape left in a bin. In Arabic, with a Moroccan accent, the speaker identified himself as the military spokesman for al-Qaeda in Europe. He claimed responsibility for the attacks on behalf of the group.[57] He offered the following justification for them:

We declare our responsibility for what happened in Madrid exactly two-and-a-half years after the attacks on New York and Washington. It is a response to your collaboration with the criminals Bush and his allies. This is a response to the crimes that you have caused in the world, and specifically in Iraq and Afghanistan, and there will be more, if God wills it. You love life and we love death, which gives an example of what the Prophet Muhammad said. If you don't stop your injustices, more and more blood will flow and these attacks will seem very small compared to what can occur in what you call terrorism.[58]

After a failed repeat attack three weeks later, police had managed to trace the SIM cards bought along with those used in the attacks to a particular house in the commuter neighbourhood of Leganés. A stand-off developed. It was ended when police stormed the building, with the death of one officer and seven militants.

The subsequent prosecution of a number of those accused of the attacks led to a voluminous indictment. Of particular relevance here are the more than 120 pages that relate to an analysis of the content of computers and USB memory drives that were used by the principal members of the group. For the most part these were taken from the

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[55] *Ibid*.
[56] The explosion of the bombs within the station, through which more than 250,000 pass every day, would have been expected to produce a far worse casualty count: Vidino, *Al Qaeda in Europe: The New Battleground of International Jihad*, p. 293.
[57] Earlier, the Abu Hafs al Masri Brigades had also claimed responsibility. The same group had also claimed responsibility for an enormous blackout in North America – one that was caused by an overload in the grid.
[58] BBC, 'Full Text: "Al-Qaeda" Madrid Claim', *BBC News Website*, 14 March 2004.

home of Jamal Ahmidan – one of the attackers. A partial list of the websites visited by Ahmidan and the others was included in the report, a rare public glimpse into precisely what was accessed.[59] The use of the Internet by those in Madrid had numerous functions, but primary amongst them appears to be the ideological indoctrination/consolidation of its members and its emotional reinforcement. Of the 186 files recovered and about which information exists, only 19 relate to logistics such as the planning of operations and maintenance of secrecy. The vast majority relate instead to ideological matters.[60] Amongst these files, images of alleged Western hostility towards Muslims around the world were of paramount importance.

An ideological dimension delivered through the electronic media was also evident in the private meetings the group held. One individual who attended these meetings described how they were led by Sarhane ben Abdelmajid Fakhet, a Tunisian named by investigative judge Juan del Olmo as the ringleader of the Madrid attacks. Amongst the members of the Madrid group it was to him the others deferred, because of his greater levels of religious learning.[61] Various protected witnesses reported that cell members Fahket, Moutaz Almallah Dabas, Mustafa El Maymouni and Jamal Ahmidan brought to the meetings computers to show videos of purported injustices perpetrated against Muslims. For example, the wife of Mouhannad Almallah Dabas spoke of a video that had been shown in which Russian soldiers in Chechnya killed non-combatants and drove over civilians with their tank.[62]

As Jordán and Torres note, the teachings and learning – of which such images are an integral part – have a very clear result. They contribute towards people regarding themselves not as isolated individuals who may subscribe to a diverse religious tradition, but as immersed in a global Islamic community, with each member linked through a shared understanding of a religion and a pressing concern for the condition of others in the community. A key part of this reinforcement of such a sense of community came through the dissemination and

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[59] Anonymous, '"Favorites" of the Madrid Bombers', *Sofir*, 7 February 2007.

[60] J. Jordán and M. Torres, 'Internet y Actividades Terroristas: El Caso Del 11-M', *El profesional de la información* 16(2), 2007.

[61] *Ibid.* p. 127.

[62] *Ibid.* See also G. Pingree and L. Abend, 'Judge Assesses Madrid Attacks', *Christian Science Monitor*, 13 April 2006.

consumption of footage and descriptions of alleged persecution of Muslims, material that included images of injured and dead Muslim children and women, Palestinian youth suffering at the hands of Israeli soldiers, and US bombardments of non-combatants.[63] Such footage, the 'experience' of conflicts in which they did not fight, and political realities of which they were not a part, allowed them to conceive of themselves as waging the same war in attacking Spanish civilians on their way to work, as insurgents in Iraq and Afghanistan repelling invading forces.

Hamburg

The Hamburg cell was a group of men living in that German city. From the group a nucleus emerged that attacked New York and Washington in September 2001 under the guidance and planning of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and Osama bin Laden. Given the interest provoked by those attacks, we actually know little about the lives of those who carried them out. What we do know is that the European-based militants (the majority were flown into the United States to serve as enforcers on the planes, killing the pilots and resisting any shows of force by passengers) were part of a militant circle in Hamburg which made much use of hypermedia.

   The author of the most informed work on the cell notes that the men 'talked endlessly about conspiracy theories and the damage done by Jews, including their unquestioned assumption that Monica Lewinsky was a Mossad agent sent expressly to bring down President Clinton. For entertainment, they watched battlefield videos from Chechnya.'[64] He discusses how the young men 'parsed videotapes of sermons by different preachers. One video they had was a sermon by...Abu Qatada, one of the principal theorists of radical Islam...In the Hamburg video, he implored believers to throw off the yoke of the infidels who ran their world, kill their children, capture their women, and destroy their fields and homes. God has already made known his verdict on them, he said, and they deserve to die.'[65]

[63] Jordán and Torres, 'Internet y Actividades Terroristas: El Caso Del 11-M', p. 127.
[64] McDermott, *Perfect Soldiers*, p. 62.   [65] *Ibid*. p. 84.

Ramzi bin al Shibh was one of the most prominent members of the cell. The Yemeni was more commonly known as Omar – he considered it more religious and it was the name he used when applying for asylum. Omar tried unsuccessfully to become one of the pilots in the US attacks.[66] Instead he served as the coordinator between the planners based in Afghanistan and elsewhere and the perpetrators in the United States. It was Omar who emerged as the emotional leader of the group, the figure who above all instilled in them a particular sense of purpose. One of the ways he did this was by propounding the idea that an obligation existed to defend those places where Islam was under attack, to serve the religion and its adherents as mujahideen. In order to propagate that message, 'He played cassette tapes of jihad and battlefield propaganda videos all over town, in student dormitories and private apartments.'[67] Little changed when Omar was alone. He took a room when a number of the men moved to a flat at Marienstrasse 54. Apart from the mattress on which he slept, 'Omar had only religious books and cascading piles of cassette tapes and videos, all having to do with Islam and jihad'.[68]

As it was with others, the Internet was an invaluable resource and impetus in the increasing militancy of Said Bahaji. Bahaji was born of a Moroccan father and German mother, and had divided his time between the two countries before returning to Germany to attend university. He was one of the last to become a part of the Hamburg cell. The alteration that required, from a man with a Western orientation and Christian girlfriend to the most fundamental of fundamentalists, was as swift as it was dramatic. McDermott describes how Bahaji 'constantly surfed the Internet for Islamist sites and became a devotee of Osama bin Laden. His transformation from an auto race fan who didn't know how to pray in Arabic to aggressive would-be jihadi was startling and complete.'[69]

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[66] M. Elliott, 'Reeling in Al-Qaeda', *Time*, 15 September 2002.
[67] McDermott, *Perfect Soldiers*, p. 67.   [68] *Ibid*. p. 69.
[69] *Ibid*. p. 72. On both his ignorance of Islam and his use of the Internet, see also National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report: The Full Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2004, p. 181.

Others

In December 2000, three Algerian immigrants and one French-Algerian planned to bomb visitors to the Christmas marketplace outside the Notre Dame Cathedral in Strasbourg. According to German court documents, Salim Boukhari was the 'driving force' behind the activities of the cell. He studied mathematics in Algeria and went to France to continue his education. Later he moved to Britain where he regularly attended mosques that offered varying degrees of radicalism. In the more extreme ones he was shown videos of the alleged oppression of Muslims around the world. He said the films from Palestine and Chechnya had a profound impression on him, to the extent that he wanted to wage jihad in Chechnya. In preparation for doing so, he travelled via Pakistan to Afghanistan and enlisted at a training camp for Algerians in Jalalabad. There it appears he was recruited into the Strasbourg cell that he later led.[70] Another member of the same cell was Aeroubi Beandali. An immigrant to Germany, he was a petty criminal and a drug addict who turned to religion and began to attend radical mosques. According to his testimony, he formerly 'had no relation to religion', and 'lived European style: alcohol, women and hashish'.[71] He claims a former Algerian army officer convinced him to change his life, by showing him videotapes of massacres of women and children committed by the Algerian state. Upon the advice of a neighbour, he later travelled to Pakistan, where he met Boukhari.[72]

Anthony Garcia was recently convicted of planning attacks on the United Kingdom. Garcia, from London, told the court that he became involved with militancy in Kashmir after watching a video about alleged atrocities against Muslims.[73] Similarly, Ahmed Sheikh experienced a 'turning point' when, in November 1992, he 'saw Destruction of a Nation, a graphic, 45-minute documentary on Serb atrocities committed against Muslims'.[74] Another who travelled to wage jihad, a young

[70] Nesser, 'Jihad in Europe'.
[71] E. Schelzig and P. Finn, 'Repentant Algerian Tells of Bomb Plot: Muslim Militant, "Horrified" by Sept. 11, Says His Target Was French Synagogue', *The Washington Post*, 24 April 2002.
[72] Nesser, 'Jihad in Europe'.
[73] J. Vasagar, 'Accused Admits Buying Fertiliser for Bomb, but "Not to Use Here"', *The Guardian*, 27 September 2006.
[74] R. Anson, 'The Journalist and the Terrorist', *Vanity Fair*, August 2002.

British medical student, described how he was brought to tears by watching a video that revealed the plight of 'Muslims in Bosnia, Muslims in Palestine, Muslims in Kashmir'.[75] In 2003 two Algerians were convicted of raising funds for militant Salafist causes. One of them, thirty-one-year-old Brahim Benmerzouga, 'had amassed more than 60 films promoting suicide bombings and martyrdom, including 19 copies of a video of Osama bin Laden'.[76]

Nizar Trabelsi was a Tunisian professional footballer in Germany. He later turned to Salafist militancy and was convicted of a plot to bomb the US embassy in Paris. According to his trial testimony, he was convinced to become a suicide bomber when he saw a picture of a baby Palestinian girl killed in the Gaza Strip.[77] He planned to drive a Mercedes delivery van carrying a 100-kilogram bomb into the embassy canteen in the hope that this would kill the soldiers who would be eating there at the time. He explained that he intended 'to place a photo of a Palestinian child killed by the Jews on the van's dashboard to remind myself of why I was doing it'.[78]

The final example here is a lengthy but instructive account of the activities of Finsbury Park mosque under the leadership of Abu Hamza. The description shows how important is the role played by globalised media in the lives of those militants, the groups formed when they come together, and the political imaginaries through which their identity as militant Salafists is constructed.

The recruits at Finsbury Park mosque were kept entertained with an endless supply of violent videos – standard martial arts fare mixed with gory *mujahideen* propaganda. One film they never tired of watching opened with a soundtrack of sung verses from the Koran as commands in Arabic script rolled across the screen . . . The camera then follows a group of Algerian fighters hidden behind bushes as they watch the approach of an army convoy grinding its way up a steep mountain track. As the first vehicle draws level with the insurgents there is a monstrous explosion, and the sound of prolonged automatic gunfire . . . The camera jerks left and right as the gunmen rush the burning trucks, stamping over

[75] Cited in E. Kohlmann, *Al-Qaida's Jihad in Europe: The Afghan–Bosnian Network*. New York: Berg, 2004, p. 5.

[76] BBC, 'Terror-Link Pair Jailed', *BBC News Website*, 1 April 2003.

[77] Z. Johnson, 'Chronology: The Plots', *PBS Website*, 2005.

[78] Cited in Nesser, 'Jihad in Europe', p. 9.

the broken bodies of Algerian conscripts lying motionless in the dirt. A corpse hangs over the tailgate of one army truck. His head is missing. The screen then fills with the image of another soldier whose brain has spilled out of his shattered skull. A fighter empties a clip full of bullets into the already lifeless corpse...The mujahideen realise that one soldier is alive, though only barely. One of the militants kneels in the dirt and, grinning at the camera, gently picks up the soldier as though offering his help, then slowly draws a knife across the young man's throat and spits in his face. The image of the blood pumping out of the severed artery is shown five times during the forty-minute film.[79]

Within Finsbury Park mosque, perhaps the most successful institution in the West at cultivating and encouraging militancy, hypermedia featuring such violent footage was invariably the evening entertainment/education. As one report describes, those staying at the mosque 'would watch videos promoting violent jihad, after the last prayers of the day, after sunset'.[80]

   Electronic media carrying very particular images are very much present in the lives of militant Salafists. What so far remains unexplained is what renders them so important. What is it about hypermedia that has proved so crucial to the phenomenon of militant Salafism?

The hypermedia effect

The key role played by hypermedia in the production of the global militant Salafist imaginary is its ability to allow for the construction and consolidation of the imagined community of the *ummah*, and one's place within it. It does this in two main ways: through the particular role of images and through the destruction of space. Experienced in great quantities, and frequently in the context of like-minded individuals, hypermedia helps make possible a conception of a Western Muslim as being meaningfully united with a tremendously diverse collection of co-religionists from around the world, all of whom are engaged in the same battle.

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[79] O'Neill and McGrory, *The Suicide Factory*, p. 89.
[80] V. Dodd, 'Inside the Mosque: An Academy for Holy War', *The Guardian*, 8 February 2006.

Space and access

Technological advances mean that hypermedia can immediately and globally project the militant notion of the *ummah* from Afghanistan to Amsterdam, and Bosnia to Birmingham. As distance is being destroyed, other factors come to the fore in offering themselves as sources of identity. This is not peculiar to militant Salafism, but it is very much a contributory factor in that phenomenon. Technological developments allow events around the world to be immediately visible in the living rooms of the West, allowing the owners and occupiers of those living rooms to 'experience' geographically distant events. In doing so they allow people in the West to imagine themselves and those they watch as part of the same community. The immediacy and virtual proximity of events allowed by hypermedia create the conditions to imagine oneself as connected to the events portrayed, and from there to feel the urge to respond.

As well as shrinking space, electronic media is very accessible. Access to the Internet and other hypermedia was an entirely straightforward affair for those who are the subject of this study – all were familiar with the use of the Internet, and some were impressively proficient. Their access to the materials they sought knew few restrictions. These were and are available for anyone who cares to look, armed with a computer and the most basic of knowledge of the Internet. Their distance from the more recognised Muslim world and the availability of hypermedia is why Western militant Salafists dominate cyberjihad. As Cesari notes: 'Western Muslims are the primary producers and consumers of what can be termed "Virtual Islam".'[81]

As one analyst who has spent considerable time researching militant sites writes, 'communication with fellow sympathisers creates a virtual community, a sense of unity and of belonging to a group and a cause. The appearance of jihadist websites, and particularly chat forums in non-Arabic languages, such as English, French, Dutch and Swedish, reflects, first, the desire among "diaspora *mujahedeen*" to be part of a jihadist community and, secondly, the importance of the Internet for creating such communities'.[82] To be on militant forums and discussion groups and to collectively 'experience' global events is to be involved

[81] Cesari, *Islam and Democracy Meet*, p. 111.
[82] Rogan, 'Jihadism Online', pp. 25–6.

in a community very particularly defined, and to confirm the identity of both that community and yourself as a part of it. Few have phrased this as well as Sageman, who writes that 'the virtual community is no longer tied to any nation, a condition that corresponds to the mythical umma of Salafism'.[83]

Images

There is little to differentiate militant Salafist websites, dominated as they are by images of violent jihad.[84] Little time is dedicated to appropriate Islamic behaviour, appeals for the satisfaction of the social needs of other Muslims, or accounts of the history of Islam. What can be found is countless images of Muslims being killed and violently mistreated around the world and the efforts of some mujahideen to respond in a way prescribed by God. And not only are the sites dominated by images of militancy, they provoke limited discussion: 'Actual discussion...is not very deep; the pictures and news are looked at and praised more than they are actually debated on.'[85] There is very little if any deliberation as to what they represent, who the apparent victims are/were and what reasons led to this state of affairs. The same story holds across militant Salafist sites. They are dominated by images of violent jihad.

Militant Salafism does not enjoy a monopoly on either the prevalence of violent images or an unquestioning acceptance of their meaning. As Axel writes in the context of the global Khalistani movement discussed previously, 'the production of the image of the tortured body constitutes the Sikh subject through gruesome spectacle, one whose contours are quite familiar to those involved in, for example, Palestinian or Kashmiri struggles. The authority of the spectacle, moreover, is elaborated through reference to a monstrous inhuman Other, the Indian nation-state.'[86] Similarly, for those Armenians who see assimilation as the culmination of the attempt

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[83] Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, p. 161.
[84] See P. Spyer, 'Fire without Smoke and Other Phantoms of Ambon's Violence: Media Effects, Agency and the Work of the Imagination', *Indonesia* 74, p. 12. According to Taboul, this may also apply to Islamist sites more generally. See D. Touboul, 'Francophone Internet Forums Shed Light on Concerns and Issues of Islamists', *PRISM* 3(6), 2005.
[85] *Ibid*.   [86] Axel, 'The Diasporic Imaginary', p. 415.

by Turkey to destroy the identity and national aspirations of Armenians, contemplation of the genocide is 'invoked by photographs that stud many texts whose actual content is not the genocide. Thus, a communiqué about a terrorist operation, or a theoretical piece of Third World Marxism, can be "illustrated" by reduced and poorly reproduced photographs of Armenian dead from the genocide. Typically, no more direct relation need to be established.'[87] A photograph does not lie, because in large measure we decide what it is saying.[88] In the Sikh example, the dead bodies represent the suffering of the Sikh people at the hands of an Indian state that is unwavering in its hostility. In the Armenian case, photographs of Armenian deaths are viewed through the prism of the genocide. They are thus stripped of context and accommodated instead in one that sees the genocide as a present reality. In the militant Salafist example, footage of conflict is taken to demonstrate the existence of a battle waged by the West against Muslims, and the appropriate response of some righteous believers.

This failure to engage with footage that is common to the groups above is not simply intellectual apathy. It has much to do with the nature of images whose ahistoricism and decontextualisation allows recipients to accommodate that which is witnessed into existing or developing narratives. As one writer notes, 'Images necessarily allow different interpretations.'[89] Meaning can be conferred upon them as individuals and groups construct a story within which they also place themselves and others, often people in disparate locations and diverse situations.[90] In militant cases they are sewn together by their recipients in accordance with, and in the production of, a particular narrative of right and wrong, suffering and resistance, one that in the era of global hypermedia need not be restricted by geographical concerns. They are able to do so because, in contrast with many other forms of communication, images 'provide little perspective on events, besides,

[87] Tololyan, 'Cultural Narrative', p. 227.
[88] For a fine exploration of the role of images more generally, see M. Danner, *Torture and Truth: America, Abu Ghraib, and the War on Terror*. New York: New York Review of Books, 2004.
[89] Möller, 'Photographic Interventions in Post-9/11 Security Policy', p. 185.
[90] For a superb exploration of this, see K. Cetina, 'Complex Global Microstructures: The New Terrorist Societies', *Theory, Culture and Society* 22(5), 2005.

that is, the insistent, repetitive narrative of victimization resurrected on and out of body parts'.[91] As a result, the picture of a dead woman in Srebrenica can thus become part of the same story as the picture of a dead child in Fallujah. Marked differences between the Muslims in Bosnia and those in Iraq, as well as within each of the two countries, need not enter the equation. The same applies for the supposed aggressors, as witnessed by the transformation of the United States, Britain and others from rescuers (arguably belatedly) in Bosnia to aggressors in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere. The conflicts do not need to be placed in a broader historical context. The use of images reduces the need for reference to and exploration of the effects of the rise of the neoconservatives in the United States, the demise of Yugoslavia, the belligerence of Saddam Hussein or any other of the range of possible explanations for the plights of Muslims in numerous parts of the world.

Because of this lack of engagement, images permit a more emotional form of argument than other forms of communication. Emotions are an integral if immeasurable aspect of political life, something that has been recognised by an array of political philosophers, but which with notable exceptions has been somewhat ignored in recent international politics theorising.[92] Emotion clearly has an immense bearing on the political thought of militant Salafists, for whom an intense bond is held to connect fellow militant Salafists, regardless of geographical, personal and cultural distance. They are united by emotions including fear and humiliation at the alleged perpetration of continuous warfare against the Muslim world by the West.

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[91] Spyer, 'Fire without Smoke', p. 12.
[92] Recent examples of those who have taken the idea seriously include R. Bleiker and E. Hutchison, 'Fear No More: Emotions and World Politics', *Review of International Studies* 34, 2008; N. Crawford, 'The Passion of World Politics: Propositions on Emotion and Emotional Relationships', *International Security* 24(1), 2000; C. Hill, *The Changing Politics of Foreign Policy*. Houndmills: Palgrave, 2003; R. Lebow, 'Reason, Emotion and Cooperation', *International Politics* 42, 2005; A. Linklater, 'Emotions and World Politics', *Aberystwyth Journal of World Affairs* 2, 2004; J. Mercer, 'Approaching Emotion in International Politics', presented at the International Studies Association Conference in San Diego, 1996; J. Mercer, 'Rationality and Psychology in International Politics', *International Organization* 59, 2005. As many of these authors note, historically there was a far greater interest in emotions and politics.

Images play a key role in this.[93] Such an effect can be witnessed by reactions to one of the key political events of this century thus far, the 2001 attacks in New York and Washington. As Bleiker and Hutchison correctly note, 'The fact that images of the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York were broadcast worldwide substantially shaped the political impact of the event. Had news of the attack been communicated by texts alone, the response would unlikely have been equally intense.'[94] So too for the images accessed and consumed by militant Salafists. Here, the role of community, whether the small groups or the larger online ones, plays a significant role in the accessing and collective digesting of image-dominated material. This is particularly relevant when grief, fear and hate are transmitted across borders. To return to Bleiker and Hutchison, 'Although distant witnesses can never truly understand the emotions of somebody affected by tragedy, the process of communication establishes a public context where the private nature of grief can be ascribed wider social meaning and significance.'[95]

Whilst militant Salafism has produced some profound thinkers articulating sophisticated arguments, the journey to becoming a militant Salafist in the West is rarely the result of prolonged self-reflection, theological investigation and political analysis. Many of those who have gone on to militancy demonstrate a very poor grasp of the Qur'an and hadiths. As others have noted, the arguments they marshal are frequently the regurgitations of a select band of radical figures. McDermott describes the faith of the members of the Hamburg cell as 'unthought' and 'received and literal rather than reasoned'.[96] Roy writes how 'The "born-again" lives a faith that is usually both emotional and anti-intellectual. Speculative theology does not interest' him.[97] When Ruud Peters took the stand as an expert witness in the trial of some members of the Hofstad group, the accused challenged him on the meaning of certain Qur'anic verses and Islamic concepts. Peters, an academic who developed his expertise in the legal doctrine of jihad when it appeared it might be consigned to

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[93] Again, there are parallels here between militant Salafists and a variety of other movements and their use of images, as an hour in Belfast will remind any visitors.
[94] Bleiker and Hutchison, 'Fear No More: Emotions and World Politics', p. 131.
[95] *Ibid*. p. 130.   [96] McDermott, *Perfect Soldiers*, p. 87.
[97] O. Roy, 'Born Again to Kill,' *Signandsight*, 4 August 2005.

history, duly corrected several misunderstandings they offered.[98] After van Gogh's murder, Nouredine el-Fatmi and Samir Azzouz both tried to begin cells to replace the disbanded Hofstad group. The religious knowledge of the former was negligible, and he thus relied upon the Internet to read aloud 'Qur'anic verses and other details about what he called "pure Islam"'.[99] Finally here, in Madrid, the tape found in a white van used by the train bombers was a recording of Qur'anic recitations for religious novices.[100] Such superficiality is not due to a poverty of intellect on the part of militant Salafists, nor to the ideology they espouse. What it does demonstrate is that for the majority of those Westerners joining the cause, the attachment is an emotional rather than intellectual one. This is enabled and encouraged by images.

Particularly when watched and discussed in the context of groups, this barrage of near-uniform images is facilitating distant observers in imagining themselves as anything but. Images of the various conflicts form the content of these sites and videos, and they are experienced as though the viewer was an integral part of them. A close connection is drawn between the viewer and the viewed, an understanding developed that they are both warriors in the same war. Amongst those that do visit the various sites there is thus minimal consideration as to what the images they are invited to witness represent. Few dissenting voices animate discussion amongst those accessing militant footage. Rather, the images are taken as proof of a narrative held by the individual and validation of their support for militancy.

There is little doubt that the power of those images is understood by many militants themselves. In one video, Adam Gadahn argues that 'It's hard to imagine that any compassionate person could see pictures, just pictures, of what the Crusaders did to those children (in Iraq), and not want to go on a shooting spree at the Marines' housing facilities at Camp Pendleton.'[101] Numerous radical preachers, several of whom are discussed in Chapter 6, have shown a similar awareness. For example, a website was set up by Feroz Abbasi at the behest of

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[98] Peters, interview with author.
[99] J. Neurink, '"Mujahideen of the Lowlands" on Trial in the Netherlands', *Terrorism Monitor* 3(24), 2005.
[100] L. Wright, 'The Terror Web', *The New Yorker*, 2 August 2004.
[101] Cited in R. Khatchadourian, 'Azzam the American: The Making of an Al Qaeda Homegrown', *New Yorker*, 22 January 2007.

Abu Hamza.[102] Later this was administered by the American convert James Ujaama for his less technologically savvy mentor.[103] Prominent on the site was conflict footage from around the world. Such footage allows for self-conceptions of groups in France, Italy and Sweden to be the same as that which they have conferred on others in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Iraq. Images of dead bodies demonstrate that the *ummah* is threatened. Those of 'Allah's willing martyrs' illustrate that some are willing to act in its defence. Images allow for the experience of conflicts in remote places and replace the idea of a witness with that of a certain kind of participant. As Khasrokhavar writes, 'whereas national martyrs have their tragedy in person, al Qaeda's martyrs experience it through cables, television and digital media. It is the electronic system, defined in the broadest of senses, that provides their link with reality. Their suffering is a pathos that feeds on images and that is transmitted by a proxy neo-*umma*.'[104]

The ease with which electronic media can be accessed, the proliferation of images it offers, and its disregard for boundaries, are helping to facilitate a particular notion of who 'I' is and 'We' are. With the saturation of conflict images from geographically diverse locations that are digested in groups, some Western Muslims come to imagine themselves as kindred mujahideen. This effect is magnified when taken in tandem with the other most significant condition of possibility relevant to militant Salafism – movement.

[102] BBC, 'From Student to Terror Suspect', *BBC News Website*, 21 January 2002.
[103] O'Neill and McGrory, *The Suicide Factory*, p. 194.
[104] Khosrokhavar, *Suicide Bombers*, p. 223.

5 | *Movement: from actual to ideological*

Even with the dearth of reliable information on many militants, documenting the prevalence of movement amongst them is a relatively easy task. Relocation is amongst the most common and significant characteristics they share. As Roy writes, the 'link between territory and nationalism, and ... between deterritorialisation and radical Islamisation, is quite constant'.[1]

Actual deterritorialisation can and often does lead to ideological deterritorialisation, in turn indispensable to militant Salafism as it exists in the West. The dynamic of movement helps to undermine 'that sense of the naturalness and givenness of territorialised "national belonging"'.[2] For some, including militant Salafists, its place is taken with the idea of the *ummah*, a transnational religious identification that consciously rejects territory as a determinant of identity. They are not alone. Other deterritorialised visions are an increasingly common motivation for political action. As Tololyan notes:

the place of terrorism ... is no simple geographical locale. It is not simply the 'rabbit warrens' that Caspar Weinberger sees in Shi'ite Beirut, or the mist-shrouded pastures of Ireland. It can be the Promised Land of Zion and of covenantal theology – the American Puritans, the South African Boers. It can be the revanchist's vision of a land that he has never seen or the aspiration of the alienated ecologist seeking a land unmarked by society. Not only the time and place that are, but absent times and places, as well as projected times and places, provide that context which is the domain in which a cultural vision can produce terrorists.[3]

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[1] Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*, p. 69.
[2] D. Morley, *Home Territories: Media, Mobility and Identity.* London: Routledge, 2000, p. 9.
[3] Tololyan, 'Cultural Narrative', p. 218.

The task of the next section is to demonstrate and detail the movement in the lives of a number of militant Salafists. This is followed by an exploration of the significance of that movement. It looks at how movement helped to produce an alternative vision of political arrangement and source of identification. There are, of course, a variety of different types of movement, and a general category cannot be reduced to a single example of it. Rather the various strands of movement should be seen as dimensions of the same phenomenon, as aspects of movement, a dynamic that carries with it the potential to transform the relationship between the local and the global. The first of those strands is immigration.

Immigration

Table 1 contains the names of 250 individuals who have participated in militant Salafism in the West.[4] It is clear from the data that immigrants are substantially overrepresented amongst those who proceed to militancy. Only 23 per cent of the sample were not immigrants to the West, and a very small number of those had parents who had not immigrated. This is very much in keeping with other surveys. For example, a recent study by Edwin Bakker notes that only seventeen of the European militant Salafists in his sample of 242 originated from European families. A significant minority, albeit at 38 per cent one considerably higher than found in this study, were born in Europe.[5] Only eight of 219 resided in other

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[4] Others have also produced lists, including Sageman in 'Understanding Terror Networks'; R. Leiken and S. Brooke, 'The Quantitative Analysis of Terrorism and Immigration: An Initial Exploration', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 18(4), 2006; and E. Bakker, 'Jihadi Terrorists in Europe and Global Salafi Jihadis', in R. Coolsaet (ed.), *Jihadi Terrorism and the Radicalisation Challenge in Europe*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008. However, the list in Table 1 is by no means a replication of these or any other list. The criteria for inclusion in the list are more exacting – the burden of proof of militancy is set considerably higher and the type of militancy (targeting the West and perpetuated by Westerners or long-term residents) is much narrower.

[5] It is not wholly apparent what explains the difference in these figures. If anything, it might have been anticipated that Bakker's list would have had a higher percentage of immigrants, because of the inclusion in his sample of militants who did not live in Europe. However, both studies do confirm the prevalence of this one form of movement in the lives of militants.

Table 1

Plot	Name	Country of birth	Country of residence
Milan cell	Essid Sami Ben Khemais	Tunisia	Italy
	Belgacem Mohamed Aouadi	Tunisia	Italy
	Bouchoucha Mokhtar	Tunisia	Italy
	Charaabi Tarek	Tunisia	Italy
Italian militants	Abdel Kader Es Sayed	Egypt	Italy
	Abdelhalim Hafed Remadna	Algeria	Italy
	Adel Ben Soltane	Tunisia	Italy
	Mehdi Kammoun	Tunisia	Italy
	Noureddine Drissi	Tunisia	Italy
	Youssef Abdaoui	Tunisia	Italy
Madrid train bombings	Abdelmajid Bouchar	Morocco	Spain
	Abdennabi Kounjaa	Morocco	Spain
	Allekema Lamari	Algeria	Spain
	Daoud Ouhnane	Algeria	Spain
	Driss Chebli	Morocco	Spain
	Fouad el Morabit Amghar	Morocco	Spain
	Hamid Ahmidan	Morocco	Spain
	Hasan El Haski	Morocco	Spain
	Jamal Ahmidan	Morocco	Spain
	Jamal Zougam	Morocco	Spain
	Mahmoud Slimane Aoun	Lebanon	Spain
	Mohamed Belhadj	Morocco	Spain
	Mohamed Bouharrat	Morocco	Spain
	Mohamed Larbi Ben Sellam	Morocco	Spain
	Mohamed Oulad Akcha	Morocco	Spain
	Nasreddine Bousbaa	Algeria	Spain
	Otman El Ghanoui	Morocco	Spain
	Rachid Aglif	Morocco	Spain

Table 1 (***cont.***)

Plot	Name	Country of birth	Country of residence
	Rachid Oulad Akcha	Morocco	Spain
	Rafa Zouhier	Morocco	Spain
	Saed el Harrak	Morocco	Spain
	Serhane Ben Abdelmajid	Tunisia	Spain
	Youssef Belhadj	Morocco	Spain
London bombings – 7/7	Germaine Lindsay	Jamaica	UK
	Hasib Mir Hussain	UK	UK
	Mohammed Sidique Khan	UK	UK
	Shehzad Tanweer	UK	UK
Mohammed Hamid	Mohammed Hamid	Tanzania	UK
	Atilla Ahmet	UK	UK
	Kibley da Costa	Jamaica	UK
	Mohammad al-Figari	Trinidad	UK
	Kader Ahmed	Somalia	UK
London bombings – 21/7	Hussain Osman	Ethiopia	Italy/UK
	Manfo Kwaku Asiedu	Kenya	UK
	Muktar Said Ibrahim	Eritrea	UK
	Ramzi Mohammed	Somalia	UK
	Siraj Yassin Abdullah Ali	Eritrea	UK
	Wahbi Mohamed	Somalia	UK
	Yasin Hassan Omar	Somalia	UK
	Yeshi Girma	Ethiopia	UK
World Trade Center attacks 1993	Abdo Mohammed Haggag	Egypt	USA
	Abdul Rahman Yasin	USA	USA
	Ahmed Ajaj	Palestine	USA
	Eyad Ismoil	Jordan	USA
	Mohammad Salameh	Jordan	USA
	Mahmud Abouhalima	Egypt	Germany/USA
	Nidal Ayyad	Kuwait	USA
	El Sayyid Nosair	Egypt	USA

Table 1 (*cont.*)

Plot	Name	Country of birth	Country of residence
	Siddig Ibrahim Siddig Ali	Sudan	USA
Los Angeles plot	Gregory Patterson	USA	USA
	Kevin James	USA	USA
	Levar Washington	USA	USA
US embassy in Paris	Abdelghani Rabia	Algeria	Netherlands
	Djamel Beghal	Algeria	France
	Jerome Courtailler	France	France
	Johan Bonte	France	France
	Kamel Daoudi	Algeria	France
	Nabil Bounour	Algeria	France
	Rachid Benmessahel	Algeria	France
Aiding terrorists in Europe	Muhammad Baadache	Algeria	France
	Ahmed Laidouni	France	France
	David Courtailler	France	France
NATO plot	Abdelcrim el-Haddouti	Tunisia	Belgium
	Amor Sliti	Tunisia	Belgium
	Nizar Trabelsi	Tunisia	Germany
Paris Match plot	Abderahmane Chenine	Algeria	France
	Charef Betterki	Algeria	France
	Rabieh Chenine	Algeria	France
Transatlantic shoebombers	Sajjid Badat	UK	UK
	Richard Reid	UK	UK
Jewish targets in Germany	Ashraf al-Dagma	Palestine	Germany
	Djamel Moustafa	Algeria	Germany
	Ismail Shalabi	Jordan	Germany
	Mohammed abu Dhess	Jordan	Germany
'Chechen network'	Chelali Benchellali	Algeria	France
	Maamar Ouazane	Algeria	France
	Menad Benchellali	France	France
	Merouane Benhamed	Algeria	France

Table 1 (*cont.*)

Plot	Name	Country of birth	Country of residence
	Nourredine Merabet	Algeria	France
	Said Arif	Algeria	France
Ricin plot	Kamel Bourgass	Algeria	UK
	Mohammed Meguerba	Algeria	UK
Airline bomb plot	Abbas Boutrab	Algeria	UK
UK plot	Andrew Rowe	UK	UK
Italian cell	Kamel Hamroui	Tunisia	Italy
	Mohamed Rafik	Morocco	Italy
Terrorist group	Ali Kaouka	Algeria	Spain
	Mohamed Benaboura	Algeria	Spain
	Mohamed Nebbar	Algeria	Spain
	Mohamed Tahraoui	Algeria	Spain
	Smail Boudjelthi	Algeria	Spain
Heathrow plot	Anthony Garcia	Algeria	Spain
	Jawad Akbar	Pakistan	Italy/UK
	Mohammed Khawaja	Canada	Canada
	Omar Khyam	UK	UK
	Salahuddin Amin	UK	UK
	Waheed Mahmood	UK	UK
Militant preachers	Abdullah el-Faisal	Jamaica	UK
	Abu Hamza al-Masri	Egypt	UK
	Abu Qatada	Palestine	UK
	Anwar Shaaban	Egypt	Italy
	Farid Benyettou	Algeria	France
Al-Qaeda operative	Adam Yahiye Gadahn	USA	USA
US and UK targets	Dhiren Barot	India	UK
Hofstad group	Ahmed Hamdi	Morocco	Netherlands
	Ahmed Ismail Akhnikh	Netherlands	Netherlands
	Bilal Lamrani	Netherlands	Netherlands
	Ismail Akhnikh	Netherlands	Netherlands
	Jason Walters	Netherlands	Netherlands

Table 1 (***cont.***)

Plot	Name	Country of birth	Country of residence
	Jermaine Walters	Netherlands	Netherlands
	Martine van der Oeven	Netherlands	Netherlands
	Mohammed Bouyeri	Netherlands	Netherlands
	Mohammed el Morabit	Morocco	Netherlands
	Mohammed Boughabe	Morocco	Netherlands
	Nouredine el Fatmi	Morocco	Netherlands
	Redouan al-Issa	Syria	Germany
	Samir Azzouz	Netherlands	Netherlands
	Soumaya Sahla	Netherlands	Netherlands
	Youssef Ettoumi	Netherlands	Netherlands
Spanish National Court plot	Abdelkrim Besmail	Algeria	Spain
	Bachir Belhakem	Algeria	Spain
	Hoari Jera	Lebanon	Spain
	Kamara Birahima Diadie	Mauritania	Spain
	Mohammed Achraf	UAE	Spain
	Mohamed Amine Akli	Algeria	Spain
	Mohamed Boukiri	Algeria	Spain
	Mustafa Farjani	Morocco	Spain
	Said Afif	Algeria	Spain
Australian plot	Faheem Khalid Lodhi	Pakistan	Australia
Sydney plot	Abdul Rakib Hasan	Bangladesh	Australia
	Mohamed Ali Elomar	Lebanon	Australia
Benbrika cell	Abdul Nacer Benbrika	Algeria	Australia
	Ahmed Raad	Australia	Australia
	Ezzit Raad	Australia	Australia
	Shane Kent	Australia	Australia
Inciting terrorism	Said Mansour	Morocco	Denmark
Ansar al-Fath	Safé Bourada	Algeria	France
	Stéphane Hadoux	France	France

Table 1 (***cont.***)

Plot	Name	Country of birth	Country of residence
Inciting terror attacks	Tariq Al-Daour	UAE	UK
	Waseem Mughal	UK	UK
	Younes Tsouli	Morocco	UK
European plots	Abdulkadir Cesur	Denmark	Sweden
	Bajro Ikanovic	Turkey	Denmark
	Mirsad Bektasevic	Bosnia	Sweden
German train bombing plot	Jihad Hamad	Lebanon	Germany
	Youssef Mohamad El Hajdib	Lebanon	Germany
Heathrow plot	Ahmed Abdulla Ali	UK	UK
	Assad Sarwar	UK	UK
Glasgow Airport attack	Bilal Abdullah	UK	UK
	Kafeel Ahmed	India	UK
Convicted	Karim Bourti	Algeria	France
Plots on the US	Abderraouf Jdey	Tunisia	Canada
Ghriba synagogue bombing	Christian Ganczarski	Poland	Germany
	Niser Nawar	Tunisia	Canada
Toronto '18'	Ali Dirie	Somalia	Canada
	Nishanthan Yogakrishnan	Sri Lanka	Canada
	Saad Gaya	Somalia	Canada
	Saad Khalid	Pakistan	Canada
	Zakaria Amara	Jordan	Canada
Militant literature	Said Namouh	Morocco	Canada
Preparation of attack	Aabid Hussain Khan	UK	UK
	Hammaad Munshi	UK	UK
Targets in Southern California	Gregory Patterson	USA	USA
	Kevin James	USA	USA
	Levar Washington	USA	USA
	Hammad Samana	Pakistan	USA
Plot to bomb Brooklyn Bridge	Iyman Faris	Pakistan	USA
Columbus Shopping Mall plot	Christopher Paul	USA	USA
	Nuradin Abdi	Somalia	USA

Table 1 (***cont.***)

Plot	Name	Country of birth	Country of residence
Grenade attack in Bastogne	Kamel Saddeddine	Morocco	Belgium
	Youssef El Majda	Morocco	Belgium
Incitement to terrorism	Tariq Al-Daour	UAE	UK
	Waseem Mughal	UK	UK
	Younes Tsouli	Morocco	UK
Millennium plot	Abdel Ghani Meskini	Algeria	USA
	Abdel Hakim Tizegha	Algeria	USA
	Abdelmajid Dahoumane	Algeria	Canada
	Abderraouf Hannachi	Tunisia	Canada
	Ahmed Ressam	Algeria	Canada
	Karim Said Atmani	Morocco	Canada
	Mokhtar Haouari	Algeria	Canada
Strasbourg shoppers plot	Abdelkader Tcharek	Algeria	France
	Aeroubi Beandalis	Algeria	Germany
	Fouhad Sabour	Algeria	Spain
	Lamine Maroni	Algeria	UK
	Salim Boukari	Algeria	UK
Pentagon and World Trade Center attacks	Marwan al-Shehhi	UAE	Germany
	Mohammed Atta	Egypt	Germany
	Mohammed Haydar Zammar	Syria	Germany
	Mounir El Motassadeq	Morocco	Germany
	Ramzi Binalshibh	Yemen	Germany
	Said Bahaji	Germany	Germany
	Ziad Jarrah	Lebanon	Germany
	Zacarias Moussaoui	France	France
	Zakariya Essabar	Morocco	Germany
Murder of Daniel Pearl	Ahmad Saeed Omar Sheikh	UK	UK
Incitement to terrorism	Belal Khazaal	Lebanon	Australia
Militant fundraising cell	Baghdad Meziane	Algeria	UK
	Brahim Benmerzouga	Algeria	UK

Table 1 (*cont.*)

Plot	Name	Country of birth	Country of residence
Established training camps	Earnest James Ujaama	USA	USA
Fort Dix plot	Agron Abdullahu	Albania	USA
	Dritan Duka	Macedonia	USA
	Eljvir Duka	Macedonia	USA
	Mohamad Ibrahim Shnewer	Jordan	USA
	Serdar Tatar	Turkey	USA
Plot on US targets	Amir Abdelgani	Sudan	USA
	Clement Hampton-El	USA	USA
	Fadil Abdelghani	Sudan	USA
	Fares Khallafalla	Sudan	USA
	Ibrahim A. Elgabrowny	Egypt	USA
	Mohammed Saleh	Jordan	USA
	Tarig Elhassan	Sudan	USA
	Victor Alvarez	USA/Puerto Rico	USA
US embassy in Rome	Abdelhalim Remadna	Algeria	Italy
	Yassine Chekkouri	Tunisia	Italy
Belgium cell	Driss Elatellah	Morocco	Belgium
	Tarik Karim	Morocco	Belgium
	Mohammed Saber	Iraq	Belgium
	Yousef El Moumem	Morocco	Belgium
Grenade attack in Bastogne	Youssef El Majda	Morocco	Belgium
	Tarek Maaroufi	Morocco	Belgium
Planned an attack in Canberra	Jack Roche	UK	Australia
Florida cell	Imran Mandhai	Pakistan	USA
	Shueyb Mossa Jokhan	Trinidad & Tobago	USA
Roubaix gang	Christophe Caze	France	France
	Lionel Dumont	France	France
Support for 1995 bombings	David Vallat	France	France
	Farid Melouk	Algeria	France
	Joseph Jaime	France	France

Table 1 (*cont.*)

Plot	Name	Country of birth	Country of residence
Attack on Réunion	Karim Mehdi	Morocco	Germany
Sydney plot	Willie Brigitte	Guadeloupe	France
	Faheem Khalid Lodhi	Pakistan	Australia
Terrorist offences in Australia	Bilal Khazal	Lebanon	Australia
Head of al-Muhajaroun	Khalid Kelly	Ireland	Ireland
Scottish militant aspirant	Mohammed Atif Siddique	UK	UK
Plot in Chicago	Derrick Shareef	USA	USA
Abu Doha network	Amar Makhlulif	Algeria	UK
Attacks on synagogue	Azim Ibragimov	Canada	Canada
	Omar Bulphred	Canada	Canada

parts of the world before engaging in terrorism in Europe.[6] More starkly, Jordán and colleagues write that of those directly responsible for the Madrid bombings, all were immigrants.[7] As is often the case in militant groups, 'None were born in Spain but many had resided permanently in the country for several years, particularly the key members.'[8] The findings of both Jordán *et al.* and Bakker, building on earlier work by Sageman,[9] illustrate that European militant Salafism is perpetuated by Europeans, divided between a minority whose parents moved to Europe and a majority who themselves did. When the remit is extended beyond Europe and

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[6] Bakker, 'Jihadi Terrorists in Europe and Global Salafi Jihadis'.
[7] J. Jordán, M. Mañas and N. Horsburgh, 'Strengths and Weaknesses of Grassroot Jihadist Networks: The Madrid Bombings', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 31, 2008, p. 21. It should be noted that several non-immigrants were not considered because it was unclear whether their motives were ideological or financial. As such, the percentage of immigrants may be somewhat overstated.
[8] *Ibid*. pp. 20–1.   [9] Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*.

to the West more generally, the story remains the same. Militant Salafism in the West is on the whole committed by Western militants who have moved to the West.

Within the category of immigrants there is of course considerable variation. Many were long-term residents. Indeed many had arrived in their childhood. As such, whilst they are immigrants, their experience may actually be closer to that of second-generation immigrants born in the West. Others were more recent arrivals. A further difference is that whilst some arrived with radical views that required little adaptation before involvement in militant operations, others had shown little interest in either the religious or political matters they would later claim motivated their action. However, such differences are of little significance here. What is important is the fact of immigration in the lives of militants in the West. That some differentiation is offered below is largely for the sake of presentation and order. The significant commonality – the fact of movement – more than outweighs the differences.

What follows is a large number of individuals who have proceeded to militancy, and a short description as to the militant activities of which they were a part, as well as some indication of the movement in their lives. It is a necessarily incomplete list. It would be an impossible task to detail the movement undertaken by all of the 250 individuals included here, and certainly of questionable benefit for the amount of time and space it would require. The intention here is to provide documented examples, an indication of the prevalence and importance of movement in the lives of militant Salafists.

Anthony Garcia is one of five men convicted in April 2007 of planning to attack British targets with fertiliser bombs. Garcia had changed his name from Rahman Adam, apparently to increase his chances of a successful modelling career. He had arrived in London at the age of five and later declared that he had considered himself as wholly English.[10] **Feroz Abbasi** was born in Uganda and moved to

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[10] J. Vasagar, 'Terror Trial Hears of Pakistan Visit', *The Guardian*, 26 September 2006.

Britain when he was eight. He and his family settled in London, another seemingly successful example of integration. He began a course at a college but dropped out in favour of some travelling within Europe. He (re)converted to Islam whilst in Switzerland where he had met a 'Kashmiri gentleman'. Upon his return to England he made his way to the mosque in Finsbury Park.[11] Later he journeyed to Afghanistan where he was captured by anti-Taliban troops, handed over to the United States and held in Guantánamo Bay. Subsequent correspondence makes his militancy clear.[12] **Dhiren Barot** arrived in Britain at the age of two, along with his Gujarati Hindu family. He converted at the age of twenty.[13] In 2006 he was convicted of a number of plots to attack American and British targets, some of which involved the use of weapons of mass destruction.[14]

Another immigrant, **Kamel Daoudi**, was sentenced for a plot to blow up the US embassy in Paris. Daoudi had emigrated with his family from Algeria to the suburbs of Paris where he grew up.[15] Another immigrant to the French suburbs is **Djamel Beghal**.[16] He is alleged to have headed the cell responsible for the embassy plot and recruited for the militant cause in and around mosques in London. In 1983, aged ten, **Jamal Zougam** was brought to Spain by his mother. The decision was not supported by his Moroccan father, who chose to remain in Morocco. Zougam has recently been sentenced to spend the rest of his life in prison for the Madrid train attacks. Before his arrest he was known to the authorities in both Spain and Morocco for his militant sympathies.[17]

[11] O'Neill and McGrory, *The Suicide Factory*, p. 204.
[12] BBC, 'From Student to Terror Suspect', *BBC News Website*, 21 January 2002, and O'Neill and McGrory, *The Suicide Factory*, pp. 201–14.
[13] D. Gardham, 'Muslim Was Planning Dirty Bomb Attack in UK', *The Telegraph*, 14 October 2006.
[14] C. Whitlock, 'Trial of French Islamic Radical Sheds Light on Converts' Role', *The Washington Post*, 1 January 2006.
[15] Nesser, 'Jihad in Europe', p. 47 and M. Bright, *et al.*, 'The Secret War. Part 2', *The Observer*, 30 September 2001.
[16] S. Erlanger and C. Hedges, 'Terror Cells Slip through Europe's Grasp', *The New York Times*, 28 December 2001.
[17] O. Bowcott, 'In Morocco's Gateway to Europe, Disbelief Greets Arrests over Madrid Bombings', *The Guardian*, 19 March 2004, and M. Bright *et al.*, 'The Secret War. Part 1', *The Observer*, 30 September 2001.

Other immigrants arrived later in their lives. For example **Ziad Jarrah**, the son of a middle-class secular family in Lebanon, went to Germany to pursue his studies at a university there. His infamy today is due to his participation in the planning and execution of the attacks on New York and Washington in 2001. He was the pilot of United Airlines flight 93 that was diverted from its course to the Capitol by passengers and crashed in Pennsylvania.[18]

When **Yassin Hassan Omar** immigrated to Britain from Somalia in 1992, he was eleven.[19] He arrived with an older sister and her husband. The three settled in London but it was not long before Omar was taken into care by social services.[20] Omar was one of the five men who intended to attack the London transport system on 21 July 2005. Another of the would-be attackers was **Ramzi Mohammed**, also an immigrant from Somalia.[21] **Hamdi Isaac** was born in Ethiopia. He arrived in Italy in 1991 with two brothers. Having lived near Rome, Hamdi moved to the capital and then on to London. He then changed his name to Hussein Osman and declared himself a Somali citizen to more easily obtain political refugee status and economic assistance. He was another of the members of the group who had intended to attack London.[22] The last of the four men to be convicted of actually trying to detonate bombs in those attacks is the group's leader, the Eritrean **Muktar Said Ibrahim**. He arrived in Britain as an asylum-seeker in 1990 at the age of fourteen along with his family.[23] The Algerian **Kamal Bourgass**[24] entered Britain illegally in 2000 hidden in a truck.[25] He applied for, and was refused, asylum, and then went to ground.[26] He was convicted in 2005 for his involvement in the so-called Ricin plot (so-called, as there is a real question as to whether ricin was actually involved). He was found by chance in Manchester.

[18] McDermott, *Perfect Soldiers*.
[19] A. Carey, G. Jones and P. Hirschkom, '2 Bomb Suspects African Immigrants', *CNN Website*, 26 July 2005.
[20] J. McAllister, 'Terror Next Door', *Time Europe*, 31 July 2005.
[21] BBC, '"Bomb Plot" Trial: The Six Defendants', *BBC News Website*, 19 January 2007.
[22] Hooper, 'Suspect Was a Roman Romeo'.
[23] Carey, Jones and Hirschkom, '2 Bomb Suspects African Immigrants'.
[24] It is a real possibility that this is not his real name – he used many aliases.
[25] S. Carrell and R. Whitacker, 'Ricin: The Plot That Never Was', *The Independent*, 20 April 2005.
[26] BBC, 'Mystery Still Surrounds Killer', *BBC News Website*, 13 April 2005.

When police attempted to arrest him for being in the country illegally he stabbed an officer to death.[27]

Ahmed Ressam, the would-be bomber of Los Angeles International Airport, was the eldest of seven children born into a small, poor town west of Algiers. After the trials and tribulations in his life detailed earlier he returned to France where he had earlier received medical treatment. He remained there illegally, despite being granted only a thirty-day visitor's visa. He later moved to Canada.[28] Another who sought employment overseas was the Tunisian **Nizar Trabelsi,** who signed for the German football team Fortuna Düsseldorf. However, as his career petered out, he turned to drugs, wound up in prison and afterwards became militant. He was part of a cell that intended to blow up the US embassy in Paris. Indeed it was Trabelsi who was to drive the explosives-packed truck into the building.[29]

In 1995 the Syrian **Redouan al-Issa** applied for asylum in Germany. His application was rejected. His arrest in the town of Aachen in possession of small amounts of heroin and hashish attests to his leading a lifestyle contrary to the religious injunctions he would shortly preach. In 1998 he travelled to the Netherlands where he filed another application for asylum. There, in the two different asylum-seekers' centres, he appears to have undergone a transition to militancy. His asylum application was rejected again but he continued to travel between Germany and the Netherlands using fake documents. Indeed even a further arrest (in Frankfurt in November 2003) failed to provide any real obstacle to his presence in Europe. Al-Issa emerged as the spiritual leader of the Hofstad group.[30]

The Moroccan **Jamal Ahmidan** was an illegal immigrant integrated into Spanish society. Whilst serving one of a number of prison sentences, he (re)converted. Previously a non-observant Muslim, his new-found militancy led to him developing ties with Adu Dahdah's militant cell in Madrid in the late 1990s. Ahmidan, more commonly known as El Chino because of his supposed Chinese appearance, continued to sell drugs. Arrested because of this, he was placed in a Madrid detention centre in April 2000 awaiting deportation back to Morocco. There, according to an official, 'He set himself up as an imam and told the

[27] Carrell and Whitacker, 'Ricin: The Plot That Never Was'.
[28] Anonymous, 'Trail of a Terrorist', *PBS*.
[29] Z. Johnson, 'Chronology: The Plots', *PBS Website* 2005.
[30] Nesser, 'Jihad in Europe'.

guards he would come back and kill them.'[31] Ahmidan's enthusiasm for waging jihad was only fuelled by a further period in prison in his native Morocco. He returned to Spain in 2002 using a forged Belgian passport. His increased religious observance meant he no longer indulged in drugs himself, but he continued to sell hashish and ecstasy.[32] He was an integral part of the Madrid train attacks and one of those who killed themselves, and a police officer, in Leganés.[33]

The story of those noted thus far is one of religious agnosticism or moderation changing in the context of the West. This is the majority tale, but there are others who arrived who were more clearly disposed to the ideology that would compel them to militancy. The following cases are all examples of such individuals.

Sarhane Ben Abdelmajid Fahket grew up in a middle-class family in Tunis. When he moved to Madrid in 1994 at the age of twenty-five it was to study economics. Always religious, at first he was affable and communicative, but by 1999 he had largely withdrawn.[34] He married a sixteen-year-old who wore the hijab and dressed entirely in black. He began to challenge his imam, asserting the legitimacy of violence in Islam. Fahket was a key member of the Madrid cell responsible for the attacks on Atocha station, and who had intended to launch further assaults.[35] **Rabei Osman** emigrated to Spain from Egypt where he was a member of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, or Al-Jihad al-Islami. Founded in the 1970s, the organisation later merged with al-Qaeda. Osman's militancy remained unabated in Europe. He lived in Madrid whilst claiming to be a stateless Palestinian. He was excluded from mosques for the militancy of his views, and began to associate with others from the Madrid cell. He was recorded by Italian authorities persuading possible recruits to wage war in Iraq, and watching and celebrating the beheading of the US contractor Nicholas Berg.[36]

There is some doubt as to at what stage **Abdelaziz Benyaich** grew into militancy, but if his experience in any way reflects those of his

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[31] J. Graff, 'Terror's Tracks', *Time*, 11 April 2004. [32] *Ibid.*
[33] J. Jordán and R. Wesley, 'The Madrid Attacks: Results of Investigations Two Years Later', *Terrorism Monitor* 4(5), 2006.
[34] Graff, 'Terror's Tracks'. [35] Wright, 'The Terror Web'.
[36] J. Jordán and N. Horsburgh, 'The Jihadist Subculture of Terrorism in Spain', in J. Lynch and G. Wheeler (eds.), *Cultures of Violence*. Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2004, p. 183.

family, it is reasonable to suspect that he arrived in France as a militant. His brother Abudullah died at Tora Bora during the US-led assault on Afghanistan. Another brother, Salaheddin, lost an eye fighting in Bosnia. He was also in Afghanistan but returned to Morocco after the fall of the Taliban. Salaheddin was sentenced to eighteen years in prison for involvement with attacks in Tangier. Abdelaziz moved to France, where he gained citizenship. He has been arrested for involvement in the Casablanca bombings and is suspected of a plot to blow up a French nuclear power station.[37]

The student **Marwan al-Shehhi** arrived in Bonn on a scholarship from the United Arab Emirates. He arrived religious and conservative, and accepted many of the beliefs of the Hamburg cell of which he became a member. Al-Shehhi was the pilot on United Airlines flight 175 that hit the South tower of the World Trade Center.[38] **Mohammed Zammar** was a German citizen born in Syria. At the age of ten he moved to Germany with his family. Even relative to the conservative religiosity of his family, Mohammed impressed many of them with his extreme devotion at an early age. He was part of the same attacks.[39] **Mohammed Atta** moved with his family to Cairo from outside the Egyptian capital. His father was very keen that all the children receive advanced education, and so Mohammed was persuaded to attend university in Germany. A conservative, insular and generally distant young man, Atta went on to be the key figure in the execution of the attacks on New York and Washington. He was the man chosen by Osama bin Laden and Khalid Sheikh Mohammed to lead the attacks. Atta was the pilot on American Airlines flight 11 that hit the North tower of the World Trade Center.[40]

Sheikh Abu Talal al-Qasimy was a leading Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA) member. His commitment to the cause meant he was imprisoned several times by the Egyptian government both before and after the assassination of President Sadat, as they sought to clamp down on Islamists in that country. After time in Afghanistan and Pakistan he

[37] Finn and Richburg, 'Madrid Probe Turns to Islamic Cell in Morocco', and C. Smith, 'A Long Fuse Links Tangier to Bombings in Madrid', *The New York Times*, 28 March 2004.
[38] McDermott, *Perfect Soldiers*.
[39] P. Finn, 'Hamburg's Cauldron of Terror', *The Washington Post*, 11 September 2002.
[40] McDermott, *Perfect Soldiers*.

sought and was granted asylum in Denmark. He was eventually captured by Croat forces as he tried to cross into Bosnia to fight there.[41]

Movement of parents

As noted, the numbers of those engaging in militant Salafism in the West continue to be dominated by immigrants. However, there is a significant non-immigrant minority. Those militants born and raised in the West are commonly referred to as 'homegrown' terrorists. Although there are several converts from non-immigrant parents amongst them, most are the children of immigrants. Their inclusion here is illustrative of the fact that movement does not have to be directly experienced to result in deterritorialisation. The effect of greater levels of global movement is magnified by it being witnessed and vicariously experienced by others who may not have moved personally. The Kashmiri shopkeeper in Peckham, the Canadian ESL teacher in Pusan and the Cambodian prostitute in Dubai not only move, they bring movement to others, whether through direct contact, financial remittances or the transport and exchange of ideas. This is not without consequence.

The majority of those who went on to form the Hofstad group in the Netherlands were young Dutch sons of 1960s immigrants from Morocco. **Mohammed Bouyeri** is one.[42] The same is true of **Samir Azzouz,** who was also born in Amsterdam-West of Moroccan immigrant parents.[43] Azzouz is currently serving a prison sentence for terrorism, and has demonstrated a determination to wage jihad.[44] **Ahmed Ismail Akhnikh** was born in Amsterdam in 1982, also of Moroccan parents. He too became a member of the Hofstad group.[45] Also born in the Netherlands of Moroccan parents was **Soumaya Sahla.** Sahla became one of the more radical members of the group, involved in advanced plans to assassinate Hirshi Ali.[46]

[41] Kohlmann, 'The Afghan-Bosnian Mujahideen Network in Europe'.
[42] Buruma, *Murder in Amsterdam*, p. 20.
[43] Benschop, 'Chronicle of a Political Murder Foretold'.
[44] Benschop, interview with author.
[45] Benschop, 'Chronicle of a Political Murder Foretold'.
[46] Button, 'The Nowhere Generation', and K. Von Knop, 'The Female Jihad: Al Qaeda's Women', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 30, 2007.

At the age of eighteen **Hasib Hussain** was the youngest of those bombers responsible for the attacks in London on 7 July 2005. His parents, Mohammed and Maniza, had arrived in the Holbeck area of Leeds from Pakistan ten years before the birth of Hasib in 1986.[47] Indeed, three of the attackers were integrated second-generation immigrants. **Mohammad Sidique Khan** was born in Leeds in 1974, to Tika Khan, a foundry worker and Mamida Begum, both from Pakistan.[48] His fellow conspirator, **Shehzad Tanweer**, was also born in Yorkshire of Pakistani parents.[49]

Two other Britons who went on to militancy were **Richard Reid** and **Andrew Rowe**. They both had Jamaican parents.[50] Reid went on to try unsuccessfully to blow up a flight from Paris to Miami in December 2001. Rowe was convicted of intended plots against unspecified British targets. **Sajiid Muhammad Badat** was born in Gloucester. He was the first son of Muhammad and Zubeidah Badat, two émigrés from Malawi who were part of the wave of Asian migrants who left East Africa for Britain in the 1970s.[51] He was to blow up another airliner in coordinated attacks with Reid, but withdrew close to the intended date. The aforementioned **Omar Sheikh**, awaiting a death sentence in Pakistan, was born in England of Pakistani parents.[52]

Said Bahajii is the son of a Moroccan immigrant to Germany and a German mother. His parents had met and married in Germany, where Said was born in 1975. The family moved to Morocco when he was nine and he returned for university. As noted, he was a key part of the Hamburg cell that committed the attacks on the United States in 2001.[53]

[47] I. Herbert, 'Hussain's Story: Family Struggle to Understand Why Their Gentle Boy Became a Bomber', *The Independent*, 2 August 2005.

[48] S. Laville and D. Aslam, 'Mentor to the Young and Vulnerable', *The Guardian*, 14 July 2005.

[49] S. Raghavan, 'Friends Describe Bomber's Political, Religious Evolution', *Washington Post*, 29 July 2005.

[50] H. Muir, 'British Muslim Convert Jailed for Terrorism Offences', *The Guardian*, 24 September 2005.

[51] Honigsbaum and Dodd, 'From Gloucester to Afghanistan: The Making of a Shoe Bomber'.

[52] BBC, 'Profile: Omar Saeed Sheikh', *BBC News Website*, 12 July 2002.

[53] McDermott, *Perfect Soldiers*.

Peter Cherif is a young Frenchman. His father was a Roman Catholic from the French Antilles. His mother was born in Tunisia but moved to France when she was eight. Peter's militancy, under the guidance of Farid Benyettou, has been tragically described by his girlfriend and mother.[54] Having shown little interest in religion or politics, his radicalisation was a shock to those closest to him. It led to his journey to Syria and then on to Iraq, where he was captured by US troops against whom he was fighting.[55] His fellow Frenchman, **Lionel Dumont**, is of Algerian origin. Dumont fought in Bosnia and was a part of a criminal militant gang in France.[56] **Zacarias Moussaoui** is a French citizen of Moroccan descent. Zacarias became reborn when in London and is alleged to have been part of a plan, overseen by Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, for a second wave of attacks on the United States. He is currently in an American prison serving a life sentence.[57]

Training, association and jihad

Immigration, both direct and parental, is a very important aspect of movement in the lives of militant Salafists, but it is not the only form of movement that demands attention. Many militants have also travelled widely, meeting, training and fighting together with other like-minded individuals. As the official report charged with investigating the 2001 attacks on the United States said, 'It should now be apparent how significant travel was in the planning undertaken by a terrorist organization as far-flung as al Qaeda. The story of the plot includes references to dozens of international trips.'[58] Other attacks demonstrate a similar dynamic, with people covering great distances to meet with other militants. Such journeys created or consolidated the impression of a particular manner of international Islamic community. It is, unfortunately, impossible to provide a quantitative analysis

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[54] P. Taylor, 'Radicalising Europe's Young Muslims', *BBC News Website*, 1 September 2006.

[55] B. Powell, 'The Enemy Within', *Time*, 23 October 2005.

[56] W. Wai and L. Charles, 'Police Trace Movements of Convicted French Terrorist', *The Malaysia Star*, 21 October 2004.

[57] Moussaoui, *Zacarias Moussaoui: The Making of a Terrorist*.

[58] National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report*, p. 168.

for such movement, such as might be done with immigration. There is simply not the reliable data available on a sufficient number of the people surveyed here as to where, when and why they may have journeyed. What can be done is to provide evidence that such movement is widespread.

Fateh Kamel was a successful Canadian businessman as well as the head of a terrorist cell in Montreal. He attended the al-Farooq training camp in Afghanistan, one of Bin Laden's key bases.[59] **Djamel Beghal** also travelled to Afghanistan and received training there. Beghal was arrested and confessed to a plot to blow up the US embassy in Paris.[60] **Kamel Bourgass**, who was implicated in the planned ricin attacks in England, also trained in Afghanistan.[61] **Anthony Garcia** also confirmed he had attended a camp on the Afghan border.[62]

Two other Afghan alumni are **Richard Reid** and **Sajiid Badat**. Both intended to attack transatlantic flights. Reid's attempt to do so on a flight from Paris to Miami was thwarted when his efforts to light a fuse attached to a bomb in his shoe were noticed by an attendant. She and other passengers held Reid down whilst a doctor administered a sedative. He is now serving a life sentence in the United States.[63] Although Badat withdrew from his proposed attack, he was later arrested and successfully prosecuted. He is also currently incarcerated.[64] Brothers **David** and **Jérôme Courtailler** left their native France for London as non-religious young men with drug habits. They subsequently converted to Islam and spent time in the militant milieu there, including Finsbury Park mosque and the Brixton apartment of Zacarias Moussaoui. Both ended up in a training camp in Afghanistan. Both are currently serving prison sentences for terrorist activities.[65] **Dhiren Barot** went to Kashmir in the mid-1990s. In 1998

[59] J. Burke, 'Hijacking Suspect "Was Bin Laden Bodyguard"', *The Guardian*, 30 September 2001, and O'Neill and McGrory, *The Suicide Factory*, p. 208.

[60] Nesser, 'Jihad in Europe', p. 46.

[61] BBC, 'Mystery Still Surrounds Killer'. Whilst this seems likely to be true, it should be borne in mind that the confession of training in Afghanistan was made by Meguerba whilst being interrogated in Algeria, a country whose methods of interrogation involve the use of torture.

[62] Vasagar, 'Terror Trial Hears of Pakistan Visit'.

[63] Elliott, 'The Shoe Bomber's World'.

[64] Honigsbaum and Dodd, 'From Gloucester to Afghanistan'.

[65] E. Vermaat, 'Bin Laden's Terror Networks in Europe', *The MacKenzie Institute*, 2005.

he served as a lead instructor at a training camp in Afghanistan. Khalid Sheikh Mohammed told interrogators he sent Barot to Malaysia in 1998 or 1999. It is then alleged that Osama bin Laden directed Barot to be sent to the United States to explore potential economic and Jewish targets in New York.[66]

After **Ahmed Ressam** left Montreal he journeyed to Peshawar where he met with Abu Zubaida. Whilst testifying, Ressam explained he was approved by Zubaida and sent on to Afghanistan for training in April 1998.[67] At least three members of the Hofstad group – **Jason Walters**, **Ismail Akhnikh** and **Zakaria Taybi** – travelled to Pakistan and Afghanistan for training.[68]

Another important reason for the tireless travelling of militants is to meet, associate and live with like-minded individuals from around the world. **Andrew Rowe**, convicted of a plan to attack unspecified targets, was a global traveller. According to investigations he visited Afghanistan, Chechnya, Malaysia, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Morocco over a seven-year period.[69] Two of the 7 July bombers had travelled in the period shortly before the attacks. **Shehzad Tanweer** and **Siddique Khan** journeyed to Pakistan both together and separately. Whilst there they mixed in militant circles, including those close to the upper echelons of al-Qaeda.[70]

Having avoided arrest warrants, **Lionel Dumont** met clandestinely with Islamist radicals in at least ten countries.[71] **Djamel Beghal** was part of a network spanning countries that included Belgium, Britain, Canada, France, Germany and the Netherlands.[72] According to French intelligence, **Fateh Kamel** had multiple links with 'diverse Islamic terrorist organizations around the world, and particularly in Bosnia, in Pakistan, in Germany, and in London'.[73] In his address book were numbers for some key militant figures in Europe, Bosnia and Afghanistan.[74]

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[66] S. Mehta, 'U.S. Indicts 3 Including One NRI as Connections with Al Qaeda', *NRI Website*, 13 April 2005.

[67] Anonymous, 'Trail of a Terrorist'.   [68] Nesser, 'Jihad in Europe', p. 16.

[69] Muir, 'British Muslim Convert Jailed', and Whitlock, 'Trial of French Islamic Radical'.

[70] P. Tumelty, 'New Developments Following the London Bombings', *Terrorism Monitor* 3(23), 2005.

[71] Whitlock, 'Trial of French Islamic Radical'.

[72] Nesser, 'Jihad in Europe', p. 46.

[73] Kohlmann, *Al-Qaida's Jihad in Europe*, p. 183   [74] *Ibid*.

Mohammed Zammar worked as a translator in Saudi Arabia before returning to Germany. There he took a job as a truck-driver in Hamburg. In 1992 he abandoned this to engage full-time in jihad. After training in Afghanistan he travelled extensively, including to Syria, Jordan, Turkey and Sweden, as well as returning frequently to Afghanistan.[75]

Lionel Dumont was the leader of the Roubaix Gang in France. He completed his compulsory military service in Djibouti. When he returned to France in 1993 he converted to Islam.[76] At his trial he explained how he used to travel extensively on fake passports to meet fellow militants. His destinations included Italy, Croatia, Slovenia and Hungary. By 2002 he had moved to Asia, where he moved between Malaysia, Japan, Thailand and Indonesia.[77]

Whilst travelling personally is common amongst militants, for others movement comes to them. Here too, movement consolidates the view amongst them that an *ummah* exists, that they are a part of it, and it is threatened.

Zacarias Moussaoui went to a college in Montpellier. There, he and others used the cafeteria as a squat because of problems in the allocation of accommodation. They were on the whole foreigners from Muslim countries – Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Mali, Senegal, Syria and Palestine. His brother tells of the relationship and conversations between them.

They spent their time talking about the latest international news. Little by little, Zacarias spent hardly any time with born-and-bred French people. His new friends seemed to cultivate an attitude of rebellion...I think I can say, without fear of contradiction, that it was by rubbing shoulders with these students that Zacarias discovered a dangerous caricature of Islam. Among them he basked in an atmosphere marked by a desire for vengeance...For them, every conflict involving Muslims offered a chance to uphold highly militant argument[s]...probably espousing just causes, but by way of extremist indoctrination.[78]

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[75] Finn, 'Hamburg's Cauldron of Terror'.
[76] D. Raizon, '"Gang de Roubaix": Retour en France de Lionel Dumont', *RFI*, 21 May 2004.
[77] Whitlock, 'Trial of French Islamic Radical'.
[78] Moussaoui, *Zacarias Moussaoui: The Making of a Terrorist*, pp. 83–4.

Ahmed Ressam was never religious in his youth, but when he arrived in Montreal was drawn to the Masjid as-Salem mosque as a good place to meet people from similar backgrounds. Amongst them the most common topic of conversation was jihad, and the need to defend Muslims worldwide. One member of the congregation was **Abderraouf Hannachi**. He railed against the West and claimed to have trained in the Khalden camp in Afghanistan. The mosque attracted a mix of nationalities, people from the Middle East and North Africa who were individually and collectively disembedded.[79] This is very similar to the Hamburg cell[80] and the Madrid cell.[81] Perhaps the exemplar of this variety of community movement was the Finsbury Park mosque when under the leadership of Abu Hamza. Volunteers from all over the world came to the mosque, creating a version of the type of deterritorialised *ummah*, dedicated to Islam and the pursuit of jihad, that they aspired to replicate globally.[82] As an MI5 agent who worked undercover at the mosque argues, you 'didn't need to go to Afghanistan, inside the mosque...it was like being in an al-Qaeda camp'.[83] Other institutions, such as the Islamic Cultural Institute of Milan and the informal mosque in Paris's 19th arrondissement, played a similar role.

Fighting provides apparent evidence to participants that the *ummah* exists, that it is under threat, and that they and their comrades in arms are in the throes of a legitimate defence to repel that assault. Of course, militant Salafists preoccupied with jihad might be expected to wage it, but it remains important that attention is drawn to a significant effect of doing so – the formation and confirmation of a particular identity.

Wadih el-Hage fought in Afghanistan,[84] as did **Feroz Abbasi**. Abbasi made his way there, travelling via Pakistan with **James Ujaama**. Abbasi was captured there and then handed over to US troops to be incarcerated in Guantánamo Bay.[85] El-Hage was later arrested and sentenced for conspiracy to kill US citizens.[86] In the middle of the

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[79] H. Bernton *et al*., 'The Terrorist Within: The Story Behind One Man's Holy War against America', *Seattle Times/PBS*, 7 July 2002.

[80] McDermott, *Perfect Soldiers*.

[81] Jordán and Wesley, 'The Madrid Attacks: Results of Investigations Two Years Later'.

[82] O'Neill and McGrory, *The Suicide Factory*, p. 77.

[83] Dodd, 'Inside the Mosque: An Academy for Holy War'.

[84] Roy, *Globalized Islam*.   [85] BBC, 'From Student to Terror Suspect'.

[86] O. Zill, 'A Portrait of Wadih El Hage – Accused Terrorist', *PBS Frontline*, 12 September 2001.

1990s **Abdelkarim el Mejjati** gave up his previous, Western lifestyle to join like-minded fighters in Bosnia and later Afghanistan.[87] He is suspected of involvement in the Casablanca attacks. **Fateh Kamel** also fought in both arenas.[88] Another veteran of the two conflicts is the well-known Moroccan militant **Amer Azizi**.[89]

As with training and association, of substantial importance here is the transformation of distant strangers into fellow defenders of the *ummah*. One young man, a university student from Birmingham, offers the following description of conflict in Bosnia:

When you come here, people they think, 'when you go into Bosnia you are sitting around and there are shells coming down and they are firing everywhere around you'. They don't know that we sit here and we have kebab. They don't know that we have ice cream and cake here. They don't know that we can telephone or fax anywhere in the world. They don't know that this is a nice holiday for us when you meet some of the best people you have ever met in your life. People from all over the world, people from Brazil, from Japan, from China, from the Middle East, from America, North, South, Canada, Australia, all over the world you meet people.[90]

It is not the accuracy of the alleged joys detailed that is significant in this account, but how combat is felt to have brought together a disparate group of individuals and helped to engender in many of them a feeling that the community in which they existed was representative of a far broader one, an *ummah* united by faith and a common enemy. The consolidation of a global community is assisted by the feeling that a representative microcosm of it exists in the camp.[91]

[87] C. Whitlock, 'Odyssey of an Al Qaeda Operative', *The Washington Post*, 2 May 2005.
[88] Bernton *et al.*, 'The Terrorist Within: The Story Behind One Man's Holy War against America'.
[89] R. Levings, Untitled Thesis, Florida State University, 2006.
[90] Abu Ibrahim, cited in Kohlmann, *The Afghan-Bosnian Mujahideen Network in Europe*.
[91] Such solidarity has clear echoes of movements such as the International Brigades and their involvement in the Spanish Civil War. For a particularly good study of that war and the role of the International Brigades therein, see H. Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, 4th edn. London: Penguin Books, 2003. Often forgotten is the fact that foreigners fighting for the Republican left were easily outnumbered by those who journeyed to support Franco's efforts. See C. Othen, *General Franco's International Brigades: Foreign Volunteers and Fascist Dictators in the Spanish Civil War*. London: Reportage Press, 2008.

One very interesting element of the jihad is the fact that so few wage war in their or their parents' countries of origin. The Madrid bombers did not fight in Morocco, but chose to kill in Madrid and Iraq. Nor did those in the Hofstad group seek to fight in North Africa. They journeyed to Pakistan,[92] Chechnya (or at least tried to)[93] and Portugal.[94] Egyptians, Syrians and Yemenis living in Germany decided not to attack Egyptian, Syrian or Yemeni targets, but, having discussed their enthusiasm for fighting in the designated hotspots, opted instead for New York and Washington.[95] As Roy observes, for many Western militant Salafists, 'the concept of "home country" makes no sense . . . it seems better to join an "imaginary" *ummah*'.[96] Theirs is a process of projectively imagining, built on the types of 'experiences' mediated by movement and media that negate the need for geographically present experience.

Movement and the production of possibility

Other writers have offered compelling illustrations of the way that movement can and does impact the political imaginary. One such work details the lives of slaves in Mauritania. It describes people who are occasionally brought to the capital from the villages where they were born and had lived in slavery. Once there, the previously unimagined is visible, including former slaves now free, and women both driving and appearing with their heads uncovered. Bales describes how:

In the countryside and village, everyone can be placed into clear categories – master, slave, vassal, or merchant. On city streets, strangers mingle. They may be slaves and masters, but they may also be Haratines, escaped slaves or ex-slaves, Afro-Mauritanians, Senegalese or other foreigners, or even those strangest of animals, Europeans . . . Exposure to this variety of people and customs opens new horizons for slaves. It is not just that many of the people on the streets are neither master nor slave; all sorts of cultural roles begin to erode in the capital. Women are seen driving cars, and some women who are clearly Mauritanian don't even cover their heads. The visible lives

[92] Richburg, 'From Quiet Teen to Terrorist Suspect'.
[93] D. Crawford and K. Johnson, 'New Terror Threat in EU: Extremists with Passports', *The Wall Street Journal*, 24 December 2004.
[94] R. Leiken, 'Europe's Angry Muslims', *Foreign Affairs* 84(4), 2005.
[95] McDermott, *Perfect Soldiers*.   [96] Roy, *Globalized Islam*, p. 68.

of ex-slaves and Afro-Mauritanians may not be revolutionary, but to the slave accustomed to the rigid code of slavery they are a revelation. By their example, escaped slaves show that life in freedom is possible.[97]

The very act of movement, and of seeing the movement of others, is noted as a key factor in expanding the possibilities of self-conception. Some of the restrictions on that imaginary imposed by the lack of mobility are lifted, as the person who has thought of themselves only in terms of a slave from a village mixes with people of all professions, lifestyles and origins.

Another scholar notes the effect of a road in the case of the Badyaranke of Southern Senegal. The arrival of the road was followed by mass conversion to Islam. O'Brien explains why a development in transport facilitated a change in philosophy: 'The local religious forces, the spirits, were seen to be powerless in the face of the road's intrusion from the outside world, the people felt themselves to be at the mercy of forces beyond their previous imagining.'[98] The road both brought and symbolised movement, and as a result existing self-conceptions were found wanting. Accordingly an alternative was adopted in large numbers.

When movement is restricted, this is likely to be replicated in the ways in which people conceive of themselves and accordingly in terms of the communities of which they consider themselves a part. The reverse is therefore also true – greater mobility leads to greater possibilities of personal identity. When large-scale movement occurs there is a resultant tendency to transnationalise 'both sending and receiving societies by extending relevant forms of membership beyond the boundaries of territories and of citizenship'.[99] Such a process provides opportunities for the development of alternative identifications and ideologies, some 'unrestricted by ideas of spatial boundary and territorial sovereignty'.[100] One vision that might be adopted in place of a territorially defined one is an ideological counterpart to deterritorialisation, a global community of believers, the *ummah*.

[97] K. Bales, *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999, p. 107.

[98] D. O'Brien, *Symbolic Confrontations*. London: Hurst & Co., 2003, p. 1.

[99] R. Baubock and J. Rundell (eds.), *Blurred Boundaries: Migration, Ethnicity, Citizenship*. London: Ashgate, 1998, p. 26. See also Morley, *Home Territories: Media, Mobility and Identity*, p. 206.

[100] W. Sun, *Leaving China: Media, Migration and Transnational Imagination*. Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002, p. 116.

A deterritorialised vision – the militant *ummah*

The militant *ummah* is the ideological foundation of militant Salafists in the West in its supposedly hostile relationship with its imagined adversary – 'the West'. As Roy writes, militants

> are not fighting for a specific national cause. They are part of the contemporary global jihad: Bosnia, Afghanistan, Chechnya, Kashmir and now Iraq. Their enemy is the US and the West in general. They are not fighting to establish an Islamic state in Iraq or Palestine. They are not concerned with solidarity networks or fundraising; nor are they involved in the conflicts and practical problems of Muslim populations in Europe . . . So the London terrorists of Pakistani origin did not go to Kashmir or Waziristan to fight the (nationalist) enemy.[101]

The construction of this profoundly deterritorialised vision is facilitated by the actual movement detailed above.[102] Dislocation undermines the saliency of the notion that territory is the principal determinant of identity. This is not to argue that movement is fatal to such an idea. Indeed in many cases it may prove to strengthen the view that there is and should be a congruency between where I am and who I am. However, movement does open up greater possibilities for altering conceptions of identity in the production of political lives. One of the main puzzles of militant Salafism is how it is that individuals come to conceive of themselves as crucially linked with dispersed people living apparently diverse lives. The considerable movement in the majority of their lives (combined with more movement in people's lives more generally) is an important part of the answer to that puzzle. Their dislocation has furthered the possibility of accepting a deterritorialised vision of the world. It contributes towards allowing them to imagine themselves as being part of a global, borderless community that transcends all else. This may be the result of vicariously experienced movement. More commonly the very considerable personal movement is a strong contributory factor in such a reimagining. The deterritorialised vision adopted by militant Salafists mirrors the empirical one so many of them have experienced. Theirs is a virtual community largely divorced from notions of territory, an imagined *ummah*. As Sageman

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[101] Roy, 'Britain: Homegrown Terror'.
[102] Farhad Khosrhokhavar makes a similar claim in *Suicide Bombers*, p. 185.

writes: 'The virtual community is no longer tied to any nation, a condition that corresponds to the mythical umma of Salafism.'[103] For Western militant Salafists, the division of the world into countries, or indeed into any territorial concerns, is of little and diminishing importance. Rather, theirs is a world 'divided into Muslims and infidels'.[104]

Given the preponderance of references to those countries that so provoke the ire of militant Salafists, it may appear somewhat odd to claim their identification is not territorial. However, the significance of those countries does not lie primarily in their territory. Afghanistan, Iraq and Bosnia are not defended simply because of the countries they are, but because of the entity of which they are deemed a part. It is the *ummah* and its defence that are of crucial importance. Some aspects of territory retain an importance. Mecca and Medina, for example, matter to those claiming to be defending Islam from those hostile to it, and the presence of US troops in various parts of the Middle East inspires many to take up arms in support of the militant cause. Nonetheless, militant Salafism cannot properly be understood simply as a defence of Muslim countries. For the militant and their version of the *ummah* it is not so much Afghanistan (or any other country) that matters. Nor is it the plight of the unfortunate people within the country who swapped warlordism for the Taliban for occupation. What matters is that it was a conflict that could be accommodated according to a view that sees the world defined in terms of conflict between Muslim and Western forces. This is the defining feature of the militant identification, a global conflict of which Muslims are a part, and explains why the focus for militants often shifts so readily.

In this, the militant Salafists again separate themselves from the majority of Muslims, other Islamists amongst them. Superficial and ill-considered appeals for the re-establishment of a caliphate, shorn of any substantive political programme, and the repeated claims to be acting in defence of the *ummah*, are the lot of militants and radical Islamists. Moreover they tend to be positions held by those in countries outside the Muslim world (understood in the more traditional sense of being where Muslims constitute a majority – not the militant Salafist conceptions of wherever Muslims might be). Such aspirations are something 'cherished only by the elements on the furthest fringe of

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[103] Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, p. 161.
[104] Cesari, 'Muslims in Europe and the Risk of Radicalism', p. 101.

political Islam, such as the Al-Muhajiroun and the Hizb-ut-Tahrir, both founded by Muslim émigrés in Britain, headquartered in London and lacking any significant political base within Muslim countries'.[105]

The Hofstad group present a fine example of such a view. They conceived of their battle waged in the Netherlands as a global jihad, as being the same conflict fought by those from around the world who had gone to Bosnia, Afghanistan and Iraq to fight the oppressors. Even the most internationalist of militant Salafists in the Muslim world – and most of them have always been less nationally orientated than is sometimes suggested[106] – would be unlikely to conceive of the Netherlands as being a key battleground in the global jihad. Yet this was precisely what those young men and women of the Hofstad group claimed. There was no reason to journey to Chechnya and Pakistan. Rather the battle was truly a global one, evil had to be vanquished from the Netherlands just as it did from Iraq. Thus members of the Hofstad group urged others in the group that as mujahideen they must 'join the caravan', as a duty as unavoidable to them as it was for Afghanis after the Soviet invasion.[107] This innovation on the part of the Dutch militants and in particular the Hofstad group was achieved because of a reduction in the part played by the notion of territory as a source of identity. The Hofstad group are not alone.

In an account of militant Salafism in Belgium over the period from 1995 to 2007, Grignard traces a shifting political concern from one that was geographically defined – largely Algeria – to an increasingly global one in which the *ummah* encompasses all regions and jihad knows few geographical bounds.[108] The GIA attacks in France in 1995 could accurately be described as militant Salafism, but they also marked the extension of a conflict from Algeria to the former colonial master that maintained a crucial role in Algeria's political life. Attacks

[105] M. Ayoob, 'The Future of Political Islam: The Importance of External Variables', *International Affairs* 81(5), 2005, p. 954.

[106] Most strongly by F. Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global*. Cambridge University Press, 2005.

[107] See R. Peters, 'Dutch Extremist Islamism: Van Gogh's Murderer and His Ideas', in R. Coolsaet (ed.), *Jihadi Terrorism and the Radicalisation Challenge in Europe*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008; and Benschop, 'Chronicle of a Political Murder Foretold'.

[108] A. Grignard, 'The Islamist Network in Belgium: Between Nationalism and Globalisation', in R. Coolsaet (ed.), *Jihadi Terrorism and the Radicalisation Challenge in Europe*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008.

on France represented a logical move in the effort to secure an Islamist Algeria, just as those on the British mainland did for the IRA seeking an independent Ireland. Such militancy is quite different, for example, from that of Salim Boukari, Fouhad Sabour, Aeroubi Beandalis or Lamine Maroni. Algerians also, these men had little interest in continuing the GIA's battle in France, but were intent on waging Allah's war everywhere. The four men were imprisoned for a plot to blow up Strasbourg Cathedral. Weeks before the attack, they had videotaped the Christmas market outside the cathedral. On that tape, which helped to convict them, Boukari was recorded saying: 'These are the enemies of God. They will burn in hell.'[109] Similarly London was the home of a variety of Islamist leaders of various colours and shades who pursued specific programmes for populations of their countries. Throughout the 1990s such people were joined in increasing numbers by those whose visions and actions were informed to an ever-greater degree by global events. For them, the battle was not for a specific country but one between the Muslim world and the non-Muslim world, Dar al-Islam and Dar al-Harb.[110]

The fluidity of the conception of the *ummah* is indicative of the fact that it owes its importance not so much to notions of territory but to the people (true Muslims) that it is held to contain. As with the Dutch example above, notions of territory are waning as the battle being waged is increasingly conceived as a truly global one divided not simply between Muslim world and non-Muslim world, but between Muslim (defined by them) and non-Muslim.[111]

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[109] J. Hooper and M. Wainwright, 'British-Based Plotters Are Jailed for Market Bomb', *The Guardian*, 11 March 2003.

[110] Land of Islam and Land of War. Neither term appears in either the Qur'an or Hadiths.

[111] This is not to exceptionalise non-territorial identities. Territorial identification has proved durable of late, but it is only one amongst several forms of political and societal arrangement, many others of which have longer and more robust histories. Each of these would be supported by alternative conditions of possibility. Moreover, as shown earlier, the nation state is a product of a certain kind of imagining and not a direct, unmediated experience. Europe, the birthplace of the modern nation state, serves as a prime example. Perusal of a political map of late-medieval Europe would reveal that it 'was not divided up into exclusive sovereignties, but was covered by overlapping and constantly shifting lordships': G. Clark, *The Seventeenth Century*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1960, p. 28. A precursor to the claims and demands of Islamists today (amongst others), it was ideological conviction rather than territorial co-habitation upon which identity was built.

The act of movement, possible and visible as never before, can produce a deterritorialisation in those who experience it and even in those who witness it. That sense of disconnect can in turn produce an ideological equivalent, as, with the assistance of hypermedia, geographical proximity is no longer a requirement of social proximity. One manifestation of this is the *ummah* of the militant imagination and the conviction that they are a significant part of it. It is in part because of this movement that a particular understanding of the global is developed and global activity impacts the local. As media works with movement in the lives of young Western Muslims, there is an increasing potential for them to reconfigure themselves as mujahideen waging war across the globe.

'Belief in the actual unity of Christendom, however variously felt and expressed, was a fundamental condition of all medieval political thought and activity': G. Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*. New York: Dover Publications, 1988, p. 16. Because of such examples of territory not defining identity, Maitland cautions, 'It will be well to remember that our modern theories run counter to the deepest convictions of the Middle Ages . . . it is very necessary for us to remember that the men of the 13th century had no such notion as sovereignty, had not clearly marked off legal as distinct from moral and religious duties': F. Maitland, *The Constitutional History of England*. Cambridge University Press, 1979, pp. 100–43. Ruggie similarly comments that 'the distinctive feature of the modern system of rule is that it has differentiated its subject collectivity into territorially defined, fixed, and mutually exclusive enclaves of legitimate dominion. As such, it appears to be unique in human history': J. Ruggie, 'Territoriality and Beyond: Problematizing Modernity in International Relations', *International Organization* 47(1), 1993, p. 151. However, whilst there is nothing natural and permanent about the nation state or any other political unit that rests on territory, it remains the most common form of political and social arrangement today. Thus whilst the rejection of this by militant Salafists is not theoretically strange, it is unusual. The argument in this book is not the naturalness or durability of the nation, but the conditions that underpin its replacement for militant Salafists. How and why this change came about is worth examining. As a study of past political units demonstrates, alternatives to the nation state are not dependent upon the unparalleled levels of movement experienced today. However, that great movement and the upheaval it heralds have produced one of the key conditions that today are facilitating alternative political arrangements.

6 | *Why me? The role of broader narratives and intermediaries*

Much of the explanation as to how the militant Salafist identity arose lies with changing social structures, with a particularly strong role played by media and movement. However, everyone in the West faces those very same forces, and yet the numbers who proceed to militancy are very small indeed. What accounts for the majority being entirely unpersuaded by militancy, whilst a small number are willing to live and die in its name?

It is, I suspect, in trying to answer this question that many people claim that alienation plays a significant role. Instead, the answer is that the militant Salafist ideology is constructed on beliefs held by non-militant Muslims. Whilst requiring innovation on the part of militants, and extolling a violence rejected by the majority, the beliefs and identifications that lie at the heart of militant Salafism are not grasped from the ether, but morph from existing Muslim communities. For understandable reasons (usually the prospect of the castigation of Muslim communities by those who know least about them), this is a view that is not always welcomed, but it is appropriate. An emergence from a broader society is common to all political actors and necessitates an examination of those broader narratives. The argument as it relates to militant Salafism is that there is an Islamic cultural milieu, one that is accepting of particular narratives. The militant Salafist adapts and innovates these narratives to produce a plan of political and religious action. Entirely understandable efforts to distance the overwhelming majority of Muslims from those who would kill indiscriminately should not hide the fact that 'motivating frameworks are constructed out of preexisting cultural materials'[1] and that all non-state 'terrorists are small minorities within larger political

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[1] J. McCarthy, 'The Globalization of Social Movement Theory', in J. Smith, C. Chatfield and R. Pagnucco (eds.), *Transnational Social Movements and Global Politics: Solidarity Beyond the State*. New York: Syracuse University Press, 1997, p. 245.

subcultures or countercultures'.[2] Militant leftists materialise from the trade union movements and workers' parties, animal rights militants from animal welfare advocates and environmental campaigners. Militant Salafism is unexceptional in following the same political rule.

   Much political violence, including militant Salafism, is best understood by viewing the events that are claimed to give rise to it as being 'incorporated into interpretive discourses embodied in discourse communities, that political violence not only builds on itself, but becomes both self-validating and self-sustaining'.[3] Take Tololyan's writing on terrorism amongst Armenians. As he tells it, crucial to the question of identification and self-understanding for the Armenians are the stories that tell of a history shared by all others. Three of these are paramount: the genocide in which their community (and often specific family members) were victims; tales of the particular exploits of Vartan[4] and his martyrs; and the Armenian assassins who between 1921 and 1923 attacked some of those responsible for the genocide. Most historians acknowledge that many (perhaps 1.5 million) people were killed by Turkish troops; more died trying to prevent this from taking place – and others killed to revenge the fact that it did. These are political facts. However, Tololyan argues that it is wrong to simply read what is termed Armenian terrorism as a direct response to those facts. Rather, they are combined with others and woven together to create a narrative of what it is to be an Armenian. These provide, or have been moulded into, a 'frame for a series of more specific narratives of Armenian heroism and sacrifice'.[5] Members act against the backdrop of a particular social milieu informed by 'traditional narratives, legends and myths with which a society constitutes itself as a temporal entity'.[6] This includes those who take up arms.

[2] D. Della Porta, 'Introduction: On Individual Motivations in Underground Political Organizations', in D. Della Porta (ed.), *Social Movements and Violence: Participation in Underground Organizations*. Greenwich: JAI Press, 1992, p. 12.

[3] D. Apter, 'Political Violence in Analytical Perspective', in D. Apter (ed.), *The Legitimization of Violence*. New York: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 1987, p. 11.

[4] In the first half of the fifth century, Vartan Mamigonian fought against the Persian forces who were demanding the conversion of Armenians from Christianity to Mazdaism.

[5] Tololyan, 'Cultural Narrative', p. 224.   [6] *Ibid*. p. 218.

Similarly, in her work on left-wing political violence in Italy, Della Porta also argued for a contextualisation of ideology and an appreciation of its origins. She describes how 'armed groups grew within legal political organizations that espoused ideologies that justified violence'.[7] As she writes:

Ideology seems, therefore, to have played an important role in pushing the militants of some organizations toward terrorism. Nevertheless, it did not determine the choice of armed struggle. The more general content of these ideologies – the definition of the enemy, the prefiguration of future society, and so on – was not unique to the groups from which terrorist organizations originated. On the contrary, these ideas were widespread in the leftist culture.[8]

In precisely the same way, militant Salafists do not appear from nowhere. Militant Salafism is an ideological subset that emerges from broader Muslim cultures. The former cannot be understood without understanding the latter, without the sense of the context in which militants situate themselves. This is true, for example, with the insurgents in Iraq who tap into the pre-existent cultural narratives of those living in the area from whom they seek to draw support. As Hafez details, Iraqi insurgents

do not depend solely on the force of ideology in mobilizing support for martyrdom. Insurgents seek to cut across ideological and political divides by appealing to emotional and personal themes embedded in the culture and ethos of Arabs and Muslims in Iraq and around the world. The narratives of insurgent groups rely on three themes: humiliation, impotence due to collusion, and redemption through faith and sacrifice. These themes are often presented separately, but sometimes they are delivered in a sequence as if to suggest a crisis, a causal explanation of the crisis, and the solution to alleviate the suffering of Muslims.[9]

That is the narrative richly mined by insurgents in Iraq. Militant Salafists in the West tap into a slightly different version.

[7] D. Della Porta, 'Left Wing Terrorism in Italy', in M. Crenshaw (ed.), *Terrorism in Context*. College Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995, p. 122.

[8] D. Della Porta, *Social Movements, Political Violence, and the State: A Comparative Analysis of Italy and Germany*. Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 122.

[9] Hafez, 'Martyrdom Mythology in Iraq', p. 99.

Amongst members of Muslim communities in the West, there is much sympathy, not generally for the militants' methods, but for many of the religio-political claims they make. Muslims in the West broadly share with the militants a belief that the West is at best unfair in its dealings with Islam and Muslims, and share with them an admiration for key figures in their religion's history. Certainly this majority view is a less determined oppositional relationship. For most Muslims, the West is more usually seen as hypocritical in foreign policy matters and unduly aggressive in those that concern countries wherein Muslims are the majority. Those who engage in militancy amend and develop this narrative and then act upon it in a particular way. Again, this is not to equate Islam with terror, but to acknowledge that those who do engage in militancy do so having emerged from communities in which specific discourses are accepted and propagated. Cesari makes the same point, noting that whilst the 'extremist outlook is still certainly a minority one among Muslims; nonetheless, the appeal of the theology of hate is a sort of fun-house mirror for certain attitudes and ideologies of Western Muslims'.[10] Two aspects of the Islamic milieu are of particular importance here – political grievances and particular religious discourses and certain individuals within them.

Political grievances

Many people oppose the unevenly applied, unduly militaristic and self-serving foreign policies of Western states – such opposition is not limited to Muslims. The grievance shared by many Muslims is more specific. Theirs is a belief that Muslims and Muslim countries are the recipients of the inequities and aggression of many Western countries. Indeed, few Muslims in the West (let alone Muslims elsewhere – as well, of course, as many non-Muslims) would argue against many of the grievances cited by militant Salafists. The divergence comes not so much in the diagnosis (although there are significant specificities here when the different narratives are examined in detail), but in the treatment prescribed. As one British Muslim in an interview notes:

If you were to ask a moderate Muslim whether he wanted the American military out of Muslim lands, the answer would be the same as Bin Laden's...

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[10] Cesari, *Islam and Democracy Meet*, p. 109.

If you were to ask moderate Muslims whether they consider Egypt's Hosni Mubarak a dictator, their answer would be exactly the same as Bin Laden's. The beef we've got is exactly the same. The only way we differ is methodology.[11]

The acceptance of this narrative is strongly suggested by Zacarias Moussaoui's brother, when he describes the response of those living in France to the first US-led invasion of Iraq.

In that period the things Zacarias and I talked about and discussed with other students inevitably gravitated not only around the issue of the Gulf War but also the situation in Palestine and the civil war in Algeria – decisive events for all Muslims throughout the world. For hours we talked about the legitimacy of the intervention in Iraq. For us, Saddam Hussein had no right invading a country the way he had, but that didn't entitle anybody to massacre the Iraqi people in return ... we felt an affinity with those suffering people, not only because they were suffering, but also because they were Muslims.[12]

And more explicitly in the same work when he argues:

The Gulf War, Bosnia, Algeria, Palestine, Afghanistan, Chechnya ... Muslims were being persecuted all over the world. That disgusted us. Zacarias wasn't the only one to have this feeling. All Muslims of our age, and even those who were younger were shattered. They felt deeply and personally, in their very flesh, the injustice of which their religious brothers were victim. As they grew older these young Muslims became hypersensitive.[13]

Of course Muslim culture is diffuse and diverse. Undoubtedly there are numerous exceptions, people who neither subscribe to nor accept its main narratives. However, the opinions expressed by the British Muslim quoted above are widespread – as evidenced below. There is a dominant Muslim narrative of Muslims unified in their suffering and persecution. This can be seen in the way in which 'many *ordinary* Muslims responded to the Bosnian genocide, and in the way in which *support for the Palestinian cause has become part of the common sense of Muslim public opinion from Indonesia to Canada*. It can increasingly be seen in the way in which conflicts in Kashmir

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[11] Cited in C. Power, 'The Lost Generation', *Newsweek*, 7 August 2005.
[12] Moussaoui, *Zacarias Moussaoui: The Making of a Terrorist*, p. 77. Note at the time, neither of the Moussaoui brothers was a practising Muslim.
[13] *Ibid*. p. 79.

and Chechnya go beyond their specific locations to find support in a wider range of Muslim public opinion.'[14]

This is not simply the view of a few vocal Muslims. There is considerable evidence that it is representative of a broader swathe of Muslim communities. A Joint Terrorist Analysis Centre (JTAC) report given to Prime Minister Blair shortly before the July 2005 bombings and subsequently published in the press argued that British Muslims were disillusioned by 'a perceived "double standard" in the foreign policy of western governments', most notably in 'Western bias in Israel's favour over the Israel/Palestinian conflict'. Moreover 'many British Muslims see the "war on terror" in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere as "acts against Islam"'.[15] Further, in a *Guardian*/ICM poll, 500 British Muslims were asked: 'President Bush and Tony Blair have said that the war on terror is not a war against Islam. Do you agree or disagree?' Eighty per cent disagreed.[16]

In the 2005 British general election George Galloway won the constituency of Bethnal Green and Bow, defeating the Labour incumbent in a staunchly Labour area. The constituency was carefully selected by Galloway's Respect Party because it had both a large Muslim community and a Member of Parliament who had supported the invasion of Iraq. The manifesto and pronouncements of Galloway's Respect Party were dominated by the question of British foreign policy in Muslim countries.[17] Were it not for a Muslim metanarrative convinced of foreign policy injustices perpetrated against Muslims by the West, such political choices would not have made sense. Galloway was aware that there was a common understanding amongst the majority of Muslims that the invasion of Iraq was the latest manifestation of British hostility towards Muslim countries.[18]

Shortly after the July 2005 London bombings, a Muslim Association of Britain (MAB) spokesperson made it clear that whilst the attacks were unjustified, the grievance allegedly motivating them was all too real:

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[14] Sayyid, *A Fundamental Fear*, p. xx. Italics in original.
[15] R. Norton-Taylor, V. Dodd and H. Muir, 'Ministers Warned of Iraq Link to UK Terror', *The Guardian*, 20 July 2005.
[16] M. Bunting, 'Young, Muslim and British', *The Guardian*, 30 November 2004.
[17] See J. Burns, 'Muslim Voters See Their Influence Increase', *The Financial Times*, 6 May 2005; A. Gillan and H. Muir, 'Galloway Victory Blow for Labour', *The Guardian*, 6 May 2005; and the Respect Party, *Peace, Justice, Equality: The Respect Manifesto for the May 2005 Election*, 2005.
[18] BBC, 'Galloway's East End Street Fight', *BBC News Website*, 6 May 2005, and Gillan and Muir, 'Galloway Victory Blow for Labour'.

Jack Straw has just apologised for Britain's role in the Srebrenica massacre. This is a welcome development, but these apologies need to be extended to Britain's explicit roles in creating the injustices in the Muslim world – from the mess that colonial masters left in Kashmir to the promising of one people's land to another in Palestine.[19]

Note that it is not only Iraq that is held to motivate militants. It is Yugoslavia, India/Pakistan, Palestine and beyond (injustices indeed, but only those involving and perpetrated against Muslims). Thus Kamal Helbawy, who helped to found both the MAB and the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), explained in an interview that as 'the London mayor Ken Livingstone said, the events in Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine was a factor (in causing militancy) that should not be neglected'.[20]

This claim is bolstered by the arguments advanced by mainstream Muslim political and social representatives. In the aftermath of arrests connected with an alleged plot to blow up planes destined for North America, Fahad Ansari of the Islamic Human Rights Commission accused then Prime Minister Tony Blair of being in a 'persistent state of denial' that British foreign policy was having a radicalising effect on Muslims in Britain. He insisted Blair had 'to realise that there was a relationship between 7/7 and British foreign policy'.[21] Ahmed notes that an 'open letter was sent to the Prime Minister from three of the four Muslim MPs, three of the four Muslim peers, and 38 Muslim

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[19] O. Saeed, 'Back to You, Mr Blair', *The Guardian*, 23 July 2005. Such views are very similar to that of former London mayor Ken Livingstone: 'I think you've just had 80 years of western intervention into predominantly Arab lands because of the western need for oil . . . We've propped up unsavoury governments, we've overthrown ones we didn't consider sympathetic . . . If at the end of the First World War we had done what we promised the Arabs, which was to let them be free and have their own governments, and kept out of Arab affairs, and just bought their oil, rather than feeling we had to control the flow of oil, I suspect this wouldn't have arisen': BBC, 'Mayor Blames Middle East Policy', *BBC News Website*, 25 July 2005. For the then mayor, therefore, the attacks on London in 2005, perpetrated directly by three British-born men of Pakistani parents and one born in Jamaica, are likely attributable to unwarranted British intrusion into Arab affairs.

[20] M. Abedin, 'How to Deal with Britain's Muslim Extremists? An Interview with Kamal Helbawy', *Terrorism Monitor* 3(7), 2005.

[21] J. Sherman, 'Community Leaders Are Braced for a Backlash', *The Times*, 11 August 2006.

organisations including the Muslim Council of Britain and the Muslim Association of Britain . . . [blaming] government foreign policy' for militant Salafism.[22]

For understandable reasons, few mainstream Muslim public figures are willing to articulate clearly the idea of perennial Western hostility to Islam. Moreover, there is also a sincere desire not to be understood as justifying a terrorism to which they are opposed. However, their condemnations of terrorism are invariably accompanied with the insistence that foreign policy explains the militants' anger, and frequent extensions of the reason beyond any one conflict to include Iraq, Bosnia, Afghanistan, Palestine, Kashmir and other wars in which the West and Muslims are the main protagonists. This narrative is precisely what the columnist and commentator David Aaronovitch is berating when he lays the blame for the attacks on London in 2005 on 'the ideology and the psychology of Grievance – the . . . business of imagining that "they" are being bad to "you", and of therefore calculating every event on that basis'.[23]

The existence of a dominant idea that Muslims around the world suffer because of Western antipathy is also supported by polls surveying Muslim opinion. As Inayat Bunglawala, assistant secretary-general of the MCB, wrote, 'Poll after poll has shown that large majorities in the Muslim world believe that British and American foreign policy is hostile towards them and that the West regards the spilling of Muslim blood as being of little importance.'[24] Unfortunately, no survey has been conducted to ascertain the precise views of Western Muslims on the relationship between Western foreign policy and Muslims. However they have on areas that touch upon this, and are thus certainly illustrative and supportive of the claim made here. For example, one survey of British Muslims showed overwhelming opposition to acts of terrorism such as those

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[22] N. Ahmed, 'Engaging the Enemy Within', *The Independent*, 13 August 2006.

[23] Aaronovitch, 'Nursing a Grievance, Blinded by Narcissism – Such Ordinary Killers'.

[24] I. Bunglawala, 'It's Undeniable: British Foreign Policy Is Endangering All of Us', *The Times*, 12 August 2006. See also R. Sylvester and R. Thomson, 'Dr Bari: Government Stoking Muslim Tension', *The Telegraph*, 19 April 2008. It should be noted that one prominent MP, Khalid Mahmood, voiced his disagreement. See T. Harper, 'Preach in English, Muslim Peer Tells Imams', *The Telegraph*, 23 July 2007.

in London in July 2005, but a far greater level of sympathy with the motives behind it. This led to Sir Iqbal Sacranie, the secretary-general of the MCB, and Sadiq Khan, MP for the London constituency of Tooting, agreeing that British Muslims maintained a 'big gripe' against British foreign policy.[25] Another poll showed a majority (60 per cent) of Muslims in Britain, France and Germany hold that relations between Muslims around the world and Western countries are poor. Around half (49 per cent) of those who answered in this way blamed the West, and a sizeable minority (25 per cent) blamed both the West and Muslims.[26] Thus a sizeable majority of European Muslims hold the West solely or jointly responsible for serious problems between Muslims and the West. The approval rating of the United States, an imprecise measure of its foreign policy, was actually marginally lower amongst Muslims in Britain, France, Germany and Spain than it was in Egypt, Turkey, Indonesia and Pakistan. The majority (59 per cent) of surveyed Muslims within those four European countries also expressed an unfavourable rating of Americans generally. Other findings included overwhelming sympathy for the Palestinians, supportive attitudes towards Hamas (including a belief that they hold the potential to alleviate Palestinian suffering), and a substantial level of support for Iran's purported efforts to develop a nuclear arsenal.[27]

Whilst survey results are not conclusive evidence of a broad Muslim metanarrative of Western hostility, they are highly suggestive that this is the case. Hamas and Iran under Ahmadinejad's leadership are known for their robust opposition to much of what is held to be the agenda of the West. There is a reason the survey asked about these two and not, for example, what Muslims felt about Fatah and Saudi Arabia. When combined with the views expressed on the foreign policy and population of the United States, the findings of this survey point to precisely the metanarrative claimed in this work. There is clear opposition to terrorism,[28] but also a strong feeling of Western

[25] P. Hennessy, 'Survey's Finding of Growing Anger in the Islamic Community Are Described as "Alarming" by Leading Muslim Labour MP', *The Telegraph*, 19 February 2006.

[26] Pew Research Center, 'The Great Divide: How Westerners and Muslims View Each Other', 2006.

[27] Pew Research Center, 'Muslims in Europe: Economic Worries Top Concerns About Religious and Cultural Identity', 2006.

[28] See Hennessy, 'Survey's Finding of Growing Anger in the Islamic Community Are Described as "Alarming" by Leading Muslim Labour MP', and Pew

hostility. That those surveyed may opt to pursue action that is anathema to the broader community does not mean that they do not share large elements of the same worldview.

Religious discourse and the heroes within

A second and very important element of the social culture from which militant Salafists emerge, and which they adapt, is a veneration of heroes and most particularly martyrs. As with political grievance, the sentiments are pervasive amongst the majority of Muslims in the West in relation to these heroes. The lessons they are held to offer are transformed in the hands of militant Salafism. Further, militants have added contemporary figures whose example and message are held by them to be the same.

Other movements do likewise. In the leftist groups of 1960s Italy, loyalty to the movement 'was strengthened by the reference to shared heroes'.[29] It was much the same with the Irish republicans and the central role allocated to Bobby Sands and the other hunger strikers[30] (whose circulated images bear more than a slight resemblance to common representations of Christ), and the 'martyrs' revered in Palestine. In Sri Lanka, people bedeck shrines to Black Tiger martyrs with flowers and oil, treatment usually reserved for religious temples.[31]

For most in the Muslim communities of the West, the religion's notable figures, Allah's martyrs amongst them, are people of a certain time and place. It may well be that they are deserving of respect and admiration, but efforts at imitation and emulation would be to misunderstand their relevance. For a small strand, however, such figures contribute towards a 'projective narrative'.[32] For them, theirs is not simply a tale of past bravery, but a guide for future conduct. They take the model of the martyr-avenger driving back the oppressors as one worthy of emulation, an ideal as necessary today as it always was.

Research Center, 'The Great Divide: How Westerners and Muslims View Each Other'.

[29] Della Porta, 'Left Wing Terrorism in Italy', p. 147.

[30] See B. Rolston, 'The War of the Walls: Political Murals in Northern Ireland', *Museum* 56(3), 2004, and J. Abshire, 'Northern Ireland's Politics in Paint', *Peace Review* 15(2), 2003.

[31] See Pape, *Dying to Win*, p. 149.

[32] Tololyan, 'Cultural Narrative and the Motivation of the Terrorist', p. 218.

For them, to be a Muslim is to wage jihad in precisely the same way and for precisely the same reasons as the martyrs of the past. Indeed, the militant preacher Abu Hamza makes this very claim.[33]

Militant Salafism emerges from this narrative milieu, adapting and mutating aspects of it to produce one that demands militancy. More, though, needs to be said on this to explain why these changes are made and why militants are persuaded to act in the manner they do. The answer to this lies in the way in which people interact with narratives, the desire to assume a particular role within the community of which it is held the individual is a part, and to act accordingly. In the case of militant Salafism, this is the effort to be a true Muslim.

True Muslims

Militant Salafists adapt from the broader Muslim narratives to produce a metanarrative of unceasing Western hostility and the necessity to wage global jihad. Their subsequent actions can be seen as efforts to place themselves within that metanarrative. One example illustrates this well. Three days after the Madrid train attacks, the TV station Telemadrid received a tip-off that led to the retrieval of a videotape near the largest mosque in Spain. On the tape a man read that the attacks were 'a response to the crimes that you have caused in the world, and specifically in Iraq and Afghanistan', and that more would follow 'if God wills it'. He added 'if you don't stop your injustices, more and more blood will flow and these attacks will seem very small compared to what can occur in what you call terrorism'.[34] So far, so predictable. What is interesting for this argument is that the man speaking was Youssef Belhadj, a Moroccan. However, the name he gave himself was Abu Dujana al Afghani. Abu Dujana Simak bin Kharasha was a *sahaba*, a seventh-century companion of the prophet Mohammed. He enjoys a reputation as a particularly brave warrior. The Moroccan living in Spain had chosen for himself the pseudonym of a legendary early fighter for Islam and the nationality of those in whose name so many Westerners claim to be fighting. That was the manner in which he understood himself to be acting. Abu Dujana al

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[33] O'Neill and McGrory, *The Suicide Factory*, p. 85.

[34] P. Nesser, 'Jihadism in Western Europe after the Invasion of Iraq: Tracing Motivational Influences from the Iraq War on Jihadist Terrorism in Western Europe', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 29, 2006, p. 330.

Ansari is also the *nom de guerre* of the head of al-Qaeda in Iraq's al-Bara Bin Malik Brigade, a suicide bombing squad.[35]

In the world of militant Salafism, to be a real Muslim, a champion of the (imagined) community, is to emulate specific readings of both the historical and new heroes of Islam in their jihadist activities. This is something the radical cleric Abu Hamza was cognisant of. At one meeting he gathered a number of young men with the promise of a very special guest. About forty of them waited patiently whilst their imam lamented that his disability prevented him from waging violent jihad. After a while the guest joined his host.

Members of Abu Hamza's entourage rushed to embrace the heavily bearded man, who greeted them warmly, then bowed and kissed both cheeks of his mentor. Abu Hamza introduced the guest only by his first name, Mohammed. The cleric explained how Mohammed had sat in this same room, and had proved himself a true Muslim by travelling to Kashmir to learn how to fire a gun, and do all the things the Qur'an says a young man should. Then Mohammed had taken the extra step and fought in battle with his Muslim brothers ... For the next couple of hours the young warrior, who was clearly still in his early twenties, recounted his experiences, lacing his tales of war with verses from the Qur'an.[36]

This, Hamza is telling his listeners, is the model of Islamic behaviour. Not piety, not the provision of alms to the poor, not spiritual contemplation of the glory of God, but militant jihad against the enemies of Islam in the manner of those rightfully exalted individuals from history, and in whose footsteps Mohammed, in the example above, was so clearly treading.

[35] Hafez, 'Martyrdom Mythology in Iraq: How Jihadists Frame Suicide Terrorism in Videos and Biographies', p. 98. This practice of adopting a *nom de guerre* that evokes key figures in the movement is not unusual. For example, Bilial Lamrani, a member of the Hofstad group, was known as Aboe Qataadah in reference to the militant Palestinian cleric who was at the time based in London. See Benschop, 'Chronicle of a Political Murder Foretold'. As this example demonstrates, in some cases the veneration was for a figure who would be known only in militant circles. These heroes to be emulated are not those broadly known viewed through an alternative interpretative lens. However, all such figures, from the prophet Mohammed through to contemporary militant Salafists, are viewed as offering precisely the same example – heroic and appropriate defence of the *ummah* in the face of external hostility.

[36] O'Neill and McGrory, *The Suicide Factory*, p. 77.

Djamel Beghal is a French Algerian who admitted to a plot to blow up the US embassy in Paris. He often sought to convince others of the value of pursuing a militant path. He delighted in retelling the story of a man known as Khalid Shahid, a 'martyr' in Afghanistan. During a 1996 battle Shahid was wounded, but rejecting his Taliban commander's instructions, he remained behind with a bundle of grenades which he detonated when soldiers from the Northern Alliance attempted to arrest him.[37] As such, he entered the militant Salafist narrative as a figure worthy of emulation, the epitome of courage, belief and righteousness.

Before the London attacks, Mohammed Siddique Khan wrote a will, a document that has not been made available to the public. However, the official account writes that it focuses on martyrdom as evidence of religious commitment, contains the customary anti-Semitic invectives and, significantly, draws heavily upon the published will of a young British man killed during the 2001 US bombing of Tora Bora in Afghanistan. According to the report, this man represented a role model to Khan, another whose death testifies how to live.[38] The uncle of his co-conspirator, Shehzad Tanweer, told a Pakistani journalist that 'Osama bin Laden was Shehzad's ideal and he used to discuss the man with his cousins and friends in the village'.[39] Whilst an Islamist, the heroes for Ed Husain included Maulana Mawdudi, Taqiuddin an-Nabhani (founder of Hizb ut-Tahrir), Hasan al-Banna (founder of the Muslim Brotherhood) and Sayid Qutb, men who had been willing to lay down their lives for the cause. Whether or not Husain overstates the case in claiming that this veneration and imitation is 'the backbone of Islamism',[40] it is certainly a very important aspect of militant Salafism. And the message that these figures allegedly offer is that '"true Islam" had to be in perennial conflict with *kufr* – the disbelief of the *kuffar*'.[41] Jihadist political violence is 'not the product of a particular individual's alienation, but the manifestation of a desire to give one's

[37] *Ibid*. p. 87.
[38] Home Office, 'Report of the Official Account of the Bombings in London on 7th July 2005', 2006.
[39] McGrory and Hussain, 'Cousin Listened to Boasts About Suicide Mission'.
[40] Husain, *The Islamist*, p. 160.   [41] *Ibid*. p. 48.

individual life an iconic centrality in the eyes of the community' – in this case, the *ummah* of true believers.[42]

If the preceding account provides important elements towards a fuller understanding of militant Salafism, it nonetheless remains incomplete. Those who are engaged in militancy accept a metanarrative providing a worldview and an individual's place within it, and thus the motivation for violence. However, it is also necessary to look at some of the ways in which that narrative was disseminated. The Internet plays a key role here. But there are also two other categories that offer significant intermediary roles between the non-militant individual and the militant they become. They are ethnonationalist entrepreneurs in the form of radical preachers and small groups of militants.[43] What follows is not an exhaustive list of either – an exercise whose length would far exceed its usefulness. What can be presented is a description of some examples of both as illustrative of their powerful roles. The objective here is not to provide a roll call of prominent militant Salafist clerics or militant cells, but rather to draw attention to their centrality in the lives of many militants, and their ability to present a specific metanarrative in a way that is compelling to their audience. This begins, as so many others do, with Abu Hamza al-Masri.

Radical preachers

Abu Hamza al-Masri was born Mostafa Kamel Mostafa in Egypt. He arrived in England in 1979, married an Englishwoman, and became a British citizen in 1986. He is currently serving a sentence of seven years for six charges of soliciting to murder, three charges related to incitement of racial hatred, one charge of owning recordings related to incitement of racial hatred and one charge of possessing a 'terrorist encyclopaedia'.[44] Hamza's crimes were committed whilst he was imam of the Finsbury Park mosque in north London. Under his tenure

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[42] Tololyan, 'Cultural Narrative', p. 227.

[43] The emphasis on these is in part due to Social Movement Theory and its emphasis on the importance of both groups and framing. For a good overview of Social Movement Theory, see D. Snow *et al.*, 'Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation', *American Sociological Review* 51, 1986.

[44] O'Neill and McGrory, *The Suicide Factory*.

the mosque became arguably the most important institution for militant Salafism in Europe. The numbers of militants who are Finsbury Park alumni testify to his prominence amongst jihadists, a list that includes Richard Reid, Zacarias Moussaoui, Kamel Bourgass (convicted of conspiracy to cause a public nuisance over an alleged plot to manufacture ricin), Feroz Abbas (sent by Abu Hamza to training camps in Afghanistan), Abu Doha (more usually known as 'The Doctor', he helped to establish the Khalden training camp and has been implicated in a plot to blow up Los Angeles Airport), Rabah Kadre (assumed control of the Abu Doha network after Doha's arrest), Djamel Beghal and Nizar Trabelsi.[45]

Abu Hamza's sermons, many of which remain in circulation, electrified his audiences. His mix of mangled street English, Qur'anic references and appeals to wage violent jihad may have been dismissed as bombast by the British authorities, but it was singularly effective in winning some young Muslims to the militant cause. As an example, the authors of a book on Hamza and the Finsbury Park mosque describe a student who went to the mosque largely out of curiosity, intrigued by the imam's reputation, which reached well beyond north London. He emerged convinced, barely an hour after entering the mosque, of the rightfulness and legitimacy of Hamza's approach. His worldview had changed: 'Beforehand I was told we were going to see this guy who was a veteran of the Afghan war, who was very brave, very humble, wasn't interested in money and was a great, great speaker. It was all true. If you were new to Islam, like I was, he was the way into so many other things. He set the fire.'[46]

Hamza's message enjoyed little variation. He usually launched a verbal assault on Jews and offered considerable alleged Qur'anic support for his calls to arms. The mainstay of the sermons, though, was the existence of an existential battle between good and evil, Muslim and non-Muslim. He insisted that those in the West who came to hear him, or who heard or watched his broadcasts, were a part of that.

Teenagers in the audience were lectured that even though they lived in Bradford or Burnley, Birmingham and the Black Country, or by the seaside in holiday resorts like Brighton and spa towns such as

[45] N. Dean and N. Allen, 'Finsbury Park Mosque's Terrorist Roll Call', *The Independent*, 7 February 2006.
[46] Cited in O'Neill and McGrory, *The Suicide Factory*, p. 33.

Tunbridge Wells, they were still on the front line against the unbelievers and those who stood in the way of their aim of imposing shariah law. They were fighters, the same as those in Chechnya, Afghanistan and other hotspots on the terror map.[47]

His was not a message that called upon his congregation to pray harder, engage in humanitarian activity or raise funds in order that others could, or to engage in the peaceful political activity that is the choice for most politically engaged Muslims. Indeed, he argued that a choice between saving the lives of people dying of hunger and waging jihad should always be decided in favour of the latter. One example of this rhetoric was a sermon delivered at the Finsbury Park mosque against the backdrop of the most recent Palestinian intifada.

The three floors of prayer halls were crowded with more than a thousand men. In the basement a handful of women also listened to the voice of Abu Hamza – who was on the top floor of the building, standing in front of the wood-panelled wall that faces Mecca – as it reverberated through loudspeakers. The intifada, with its images of children throwing stones at heavily armed soldiers and tanks, was a powerful tool with which to inflame the audience. But it was not just the intifada. The Palestinian struggle was merely one battle of many facing the *ummah* around the world. Muslims were being oppressed by the kuffar in Kashmir and Chechnya, and by apostate rulers in Egypt, Yemen, Saudi Arabia and throughout their own lands. There could be only one solution: jihad.[48]

Assisting his task was the perception that Hamza was not one who simply exalted the notion of jihad, but one who had also waged it. Here was a man who so clearly appeared to have lived and breathed jihad. He sported a scruffy semi-military raincoat, a black turban in the style of the Taliban, and travelled with a group of bodyguards. But above all it was the hook or stumps in place of his hands and the missing eye that signalled to his audience his willingness to fight for Allah. Hamza was careful not to provide a consistent account of how he came to be injured. The result was that his audience surmised that he had fought and endured for the sake of Allah and was someone whose actions made him a true Muslim. One of his followers explained, 'I have never heard Abu Hamza speak of that day.

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[47] *Ibid.* p. 49.   [48] *Ibid.* pp. 55–6.

He has never discussed it again. A lot of the veterans are the same, they do not like to talk of personal heroics or bravery. But what happened that day is what made him the man he became and is the reason why he is so loved and revered.'[49]

Abu Hamza was a very public figure, and although he was somewhat cautious as to when he used his more incendiary language, transcripts and recordings of many of his speeches remain available. They illustrate the centrality of his message that Islam is under threat from innately hostile non-believers and that it is the responsibility of all Muslims to take up arms in its defence. In one reading he urged: 'anything that will help the intifada, just do it. If it is killing, do it. If it is paying, pay, if it is ambushing, ambush, if it is poisoning, poison. You help your brothers, you help Islam in any way you like it, anywhere you like it. They are all kuffar and they are all acting and fighting as one body and we should give them back as one body.'[50]

The following longer appeal was delivered in a Friday sermon and was formally available online. Note that in this presentation there is not only the usual demand for jihad in response to Western hostility. There is also an invocation of key figures, jihadists whose example should be followed. His exhortations are for a modern replication of those historic heroes who fell in defence of the *ummah*.

The ideology of martyrdom is spreading now in our nation ... We saw the martyrs who exploded themselves in Iraq, and the martyrdom operations in Riyadh where they attacked the government building in which people are tortured and in which the honour of both Muslim men and Muslim women is violated ... The believers fight for Allah, whereas the infidels fight for the *taghut*.[51] Fight the allies of Satan. Indeed, 'Satan's cunning is weak' [Qur'an, 4:76] ... When Abu Bakr[52] fought against the apostates, at the end [of the war] he made them acknowledge that the place of their dead is in Hell and that the place of those who died from among the believers and who fought according to the *Shari'a* was in paradise. Today, we do not possess the might that Abu Bakr had, but the principles have not died. Whether we have might or not, the principle does not die ... The Prophet Muhammad said:

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[49] Cited in O'Neill and McGrory, *The Suicide Factory*, p. 27.
[50] *Ibid*. pp. 56–7.
[51] Taghut is a Qur'anic term which, according to traditional Islamic exegetes, signifies idolatry, Satan or the demonic forces of evil. Present-day Islamists use this term to signify those Muslim rulers whom they consider to be hypocrites and therefore apostates.
[52] The first successor to Mohammed.

'I swear by him who holds my soul in his hand. I wish that I should fight for Allah and be killed and come back to life, and fight, and be killed, and come back to life, and fight, and be killed.' The Prophet said: 'he who dies defending his faith is a martyr. He who dies in defence of his honour is a martyr. He who dies in defence of his property is a martyr. He who dies to ward off injustice is a martyr.' Look how he enumerates the various types of martyrs, so that the nation of Islam shall not be in humiliation.[53]

Abu Hamza is a particularly successful example of a breed of militant preacher that has been crucial in the cultivation of militants in the West in the dissemination of the message that global jihad is an imperative for all Muslims. In very many of the cases of people who have engaged in militancy in the West there has been a similar figure that has guided and encouraged them on their way. One of these is Abdullah al-Faisal. An Islamic convert born to a Salvation Army family in Jamaica, he counted Abu Hamza as his mentor. Al-Faisal toured Britain conducting religious study circles for the types of small groups that Siddique Khan and others ran in Beeston. Indeed, he made at least three such trips to those who would attack London in 2005. Khan is reported to have asked the self-styled preacher many questions when he visited.[54] Faisal is known to have exerted considerable influence over another of the bombers, his fellow Jamaican-born convert Germaine Lindsay.[55] Both Lindsay and Khan had large collections of his taped sermons that were sold throughout the country.[56]

Another figure able to propagate the militant message was Mohammed Fazazi. A Moroccan cleric currently serving a thirty-year prison sentence for his role in attacks in Casablanca, he preached relentless, violent jihad at almost every opportunity. He proved particularly influential on Jamal Zougam, a key member of the Madrid cell, and was closely connected to Abu Dada, the leader of an al-Qaeda cell in the Spanish capital. Zougam travelled back to Morocco frequently, and often attended Fazazi's sermons when he did so.[57] Fazazi's influence extended beyond Spain. The radicalised young men of Hamburg would meet regularly with him when he preached for months at a time

[53] A. Hamza, 'Transcript of a Friday Sermon', *MEMRI Website*, 23 April 2004.
[54] O'Neill and McGrory, *The Suicide Factory*, p. 272.
[55] Home Office, 'Report of the Official Account of the Bombings in London on 7th July 2005'.
[56] O'Neill and McGrory, *The Suicide Factory*, p. 272.
[57] M. Townsend *et al.*, 'The Secret War', *The Observer*, 21 March 2004.

at the al-Quds mosque in the city. Accounts suggest he paid a great deal of attention to one group – impressed by the greater level of dedication to his message than he commonly found.[58] Many of those went on to attack the United States in 2001. A Moroccan-born British Muslim, Abdulatif Merroun, who was also convicted of a role in the Casablanca attacks, was another follower.[59] Fazazi was also an acquaintance of Abu Qatada, a rival of Abu Hamza as the most influential militant cleric in London (and formally for the post at Finsbury Park mosque).[60] It was Abu Qatada that people, including Djamel Beghal, Nizar Trabelsi, Kamel Daoudi and Zacharias Moussaoui, claimed influenced them profoundly on their path to militancy.[61] Another whom he is credited as influencing is Abdul Nacer Benbrika, a Melbourne-based militant, who is said to have become a follower after hearing Abu Qatada speak in Australia. According to one report, 'A senior Muslim told *The Australian* newspaper that Abu Qatada was radical and politicised – we had never heard this stuff before. His impact was enormous and that is where it all began. This is how the ideology of [Benbrika] entered Australia. Prior to Abu Qatada's visit, most radicals were just normal guys.'[62]

Redouan al-Issa was the spiritual leader of the Hofstad group. A Syrian, he failed to gain asylum in Germany and then went to the Netherlands. He fled the day van Gogh was murdered.[63] There is some doubt as to his current whereabouts, but according to a Dutch intelligence official there are indications that he might have returned to Syria and an uncertain fate there.[64] He familiarised his young students with the writings of key militant figures such as Sayid Qutb, ideas and people that were often new to them.[65] His influence was considerable. His expertise was far greater than that of the others

[58] McDermott, *Perfect Soldiers*, p. 87.
[59] A. Barnett and M. Bright, 'Heathrow Worker Jailed for Links with Al-Qaeda', *The Observer*, 21 March 2004.
[60] Townsend *et al.*, 'The Secret War'.
[61] C. Amanpour, 'Q&A with Muslim Cleric Abu Qatada', *CNN Website*, 29 November 2001.
[62] C. Cooper, 'Suspect Linked to Radical UK Cleric', *The Times*, 13 November 2005.
[63] Benschop, 'Chronicle of a Political Murder Foretold'.
[64] P. Nesser, 'The Slaying of the Dutch Filmmaker – Religiously Motivated Violence or Islamist Terrorism in the Name of Global Jihad?', *FFI RAPPORT*, 2005.
[65] Peters, 'Interview with Author', 24 September 2007.

who would later form the Hofstad group, and he exuded a calm self-assurance. However, a great deal of his appeal lay in his giving the impression that he had fighting experience and that he and those under his influence were part of the claimed global jihad. To his followers he was the exemplar of a real Muslim, a global representative of the *ummah* who, it was presumed, had fought for the cause.[66]

Very few militant Salafists become militants without significant interaction with radical preachers. The story of most is one in which they sought out, or somehow came into contact with, such men. Accordingly they represent a significant conduit on the path to militancy. They are not however a replacement for other conditions described in subsequent chapters. Indeed radical preachers themselves are products of these forces. Their role is one of a consolidation of identity and persuasion of duty that is dependent upon media and movement. The other important purveyor of the militant narrative is the group.

The group

The majority of those involved in militant Salafism become so in the context of a group. These groups are significant in the promotion and propagation of the metanarrative discussed and outlined above. As with militant preachers, the group does not act independently of other factors. In group settings, videos will be downloaded – the significance of which we will turn to next – and the sermons of radical preachers and tracts of militant ideologues digested. Such groups are an important factor in the acceptance of the metanarative that is at the heart of militant Salafism. As with the case of the radical preachers, this is best illustrated through examples – here Hamburg and Beeston.

Hamburg

In Hamburg, many of the men who would later go on to attack the United States in 2001 attended the al-Quds mosque in the city. The mosque was the destination for those Arabs and others from around the world who were attracted by its uncompromising fundamentalist

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[66] Benschop, interview with author, 24 September 2007.

message.[67] Even within a milieu that was happy to listen to speeches that argued that the 'jihad for God's cause is hard for the infidels, because our religion has ordered us to cut their throats'[68] and calling for attacks against 'Jews, Israel and all unbelievers',[69] there was a split. Those more extreme worshippers sat apart at the rear of the building. From that group the core of the Hamburg cell emerged, including Mohammed Atta, Marwan al-Shehhi, Ziad Jarrah, Ramzi bin al Shibh and Zakariya Essabar.[70]

As with all the other groups of militant Salafists examined here, the one that attacked the United States was relatively fluid.[71] People came to the group for a variety of reasons. Many left, often disturbed by the radicalisation and fervour of others within it. Those that remained continued to worship at al-Quds and elsewhere, but also set up residence in an apartment in Marienstrasse 54 that became known as 'Dar al Ansar' (the house of the followers).[72] As with the group at al-Quds, the tenants of Marienstrasse have been described as 'almost fungible. Over two years, more than a dozen men listed it as their residence. They moved in and out as their needs or inclinations changed'.[73]

It was amongst this group, using Marienstrasse 54 as a base, that the cell consolidated over the weeks. Other radicals would arrive for a meal or a short stay. As the more moderating voices began to come around less, and eventually not at all, they were replaced by those who shared the worldview of Atta and the others. Jihad became the topic of the day, every day. The men accepted and extolled the Qur'anic idea that 'the Muslim society is like a body: if one part is hurt, the whole

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[67] Earlier a German film crew had used hidden cameras to record an imam there preaching hatred against the West. See The Reporters, Writers and Editors of *Der Spiegel* Magazine, *Inside 9–11: What Really Happened*. New York: St Martin's Press, 2002, p. 186.

[68] Fazazi, cited in McDermott, *Perfect Soldiers*, p. 5.

[69] Sheik Azid al Kirani, cited in Finn, 'Hamburg's Cauldron of Terror'.

[70] McDermott, *Perfect Soldiers*, p. 4.

[71] McDermott's description of them being 'small, fluid and mean', *Perfect Soldiers*, p. 4, is accurate and applicable to the majority of militant groups.

[72] *Ibid*. p. 63. Apparently this was in tribute to another house, outside Peshawar, which Osama bin Laden had similarly named, and which he used to receive and then direct volunteers for the war against the invading Soviet forces. See J. Miller, M. Stone and C. Mitchell, *The Cell: Inside the 9/11 Plot and Why the FBI and CIA Failed to Stop It*. New York: Hyperion, 2002, pp. 255–6.

[73] McDermott, *Perfect Soldiers*, p. 64.

body suffers'.[74] The message that was repeated over and over again was that these men, as true Muslims, were duty-bound to defend their co-religionists and their religion, both of which were under attack. 'One week, the members were intent on fighting in Kosovo, the next in Chechnya or Afghanistan or Bosnia. The men were agreed: they wanted to fight – they just didn't know which war.'[75]

The house became home to a close-knit group. There,

[h]owever virulent and extreme its discourse, a spirit of easy brotherhood prevailed within the group. The men shared apartments, bank accounts, and cars. The group members strictly observed the tenets of their religion; they prayed five times a day, maintained strict Islamic diets, and even debated the proper length of their beards. They talked endlessly about the damage done by Jews. For entertainment, they watched battlefield videos and sang songs about martyrdom.[76]

Beeston

The men who attacked the London transport system in 2005 also emerged from a militant local milieu. This was a group of people who cheered as the planes hit the World Trade Center, and who arranged a party the following day to celebrate.[77] Members of that radicalised community met and congregated at a number of venues. They did not have the luxury of a mosque in which their views were welcomed. In Beeston, the small town from which three of the four bombers came, there is no radical mosque, no equivalent to al-Quds, Finsbury Park (although Khan and Tanweer did travel down to listen to Abu Hamza there) or the Islamic Cultural Institute of Milan. Indeed they were banned from several local mosques, as their increasingly extreme views proved at odds with the teachings therein.[78] One venue in which they met was the Iqra bookshop. In the immediate aftermath of the attacks on London the bookshop attracted considerable attention. Investigations revealed that it sold, amongst a wealth of other

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[74] *Ibid*. pp. 66–7.   [75] *Ibid*. p. 65.
[76] Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, p. 105.
[77] Gilbertson, '"When I Heard Where the Bombers Were from I Felt Sick"'.
[78] See N. Britten and P. Stokes, 'Police Extend Raids to an Islamic Bookshop', *The Telegraph*, 16 July 2005, and P. Tumelty, 'New Developments Following the London Bombings', *Terrorism Monitor* 3(23), 2005.

literature, videos purportedly demonstrating the horrors visited upon a global Muslim community by Western powers. Particularly common were videos of Bosnia and Chechnya. It also offered a meeting place for some radicalised individuals, and was a location where some delivered lectures and led discussion groups. Gilbertson, the IT worker employed there, describes the conversation in the rooms off the bookshop:

Martin 'Abdullah' McDaid[79] did most of the talking, most of the ranting and raving; and as an ex-Marine, he knew about matters military. Two of those who later became bombers on July 7th – Sidique Khan and Shehzad Tanweer – were regular types – but the talk around me, all the conversation between themselves and their 'brothers', was about Jihad, Jewish conspiracy, how the Holocaust was a fake, the 'Great Satan' America – and Britain's alliance with the Satanic USA. Bush's word 'Crusade' triggered them off – triggered off their ranting about the 'Jihad', and we used it in the presentations.[80]

Also crucial to the story of the London bombers is the Mullah Crew. The gang took upon themselves the task of cleaning up their area, returning local Muslims to the 'right path'. Their radicalism was largely tolerated in the area because of some success in reducing crime and drug use amongst young Muslims. The crew met regularly, trained at a gym (whose radicalism earned it the sobriquet the al-Qaeda gym), watched videos and held lectures and discussions about the suffering of Muslims around the world. It also trained young men for tasks that included jihad in Afghanistan and Iraq.[81]

Several other groups from Madrid, Rome and Paris to Amsterdam, London and Brussels might have been chosen to illustrate the way in which small groups encourage the development and acceptance of a specific narrative and action in accordance with it. Such clandestine groups offer a particularly fruitful route for the promulgation of the militant Salafist metanarrative. Those who participate in the types of cells in the West that may produce acts of terror have divorced themselves, at least temporarily, from a broader constituency. They

[79] A former British special forces soldier who converted to Islam.
[80] Gilbertson, '"When I Heard Where the Bombers Were from I Felt Sick"'.
[81] *Ibid*. See also I. Herbert and K. Sengputa, 'The Jihadist Who Needed No Brainwashing to Blow up Aldgate Train', *The Independent*, 10 September 2005.

are a group apart, a self-appointed vanguard of a movement tapping into specific interpretations. Separate from dissenting views and moderating voices, increased isolation breeds an easier acceptance of radical messages. Thus those men of Hamburg 'who joined their plights to that of fundamentalist Islam chose not simply a new mosque or religious doctrine but an entry to a new way of life, the acquisition of a new world view, in fact, of a new world'.[82]

Within such groups, the cause tends to become all-consuming, a 'totalistic activity'.[83] As one German participant in far left direct politics in the 1960s explained, 'We did nothing else, for 14–16 hours a day, but work on a leaflet, produce information material for the media, organise meetings or discussions in support of the hunger strike.'[84] As the Russian nihilist Sergey Nechaev argued, 'The revolutionary is a doomed man. He has no interests of his own, no affairs, no attachments, no belongings, not even a name. Everything in him is absorbed by a single exclusive interest, a single thought, a single passion – the revolution.'[85] In some cases, particularly those who turn to violence, the group becomes more insular. The image of the opponent (the state, the West, Jews etc.) as irredeemably cruel and hostile is developed and strengthened, and there is a resultant legitimation of their own adoption of violence.

Group solidarity becomes particularly important in clandestine groups,[86] and has led commentators to suggest that it is the dynamics of loyalty and friendship between fellow members that is the crucial explanation of why individuals become militants. Sageman, for

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[82] McDermott, *Perfect Soldiers*, p. 66.

[83] D. Della Porta, 'Political Socialization in Left-Wing Underground Organizations', in D. Della Porta (ed.), *Social Movements and Violence: Participation in Underground Organizations*. Greenwich: JAI Press, 1992, p. 262.

[84] *Ibid.* p. 265.

[85] Cited in L. Weinberg, 'Political and Revolutionary Ideologies', in J. Forest (ed.), *The Making of a Terrorist: Recruitment, Training and Root Causes*, Westport: Praeger, 2006, p. 184.

[86] This can produce some apparently rather bizarre results. In the living-room meetings organised by Bouyeri and al-Issa in the Netherlands there was a clear sense of heightened group solidarity. This was deliberately cultivated. Before the weekly lessons began, al-Issa made his Surinamese wife drain her breast milk, which was then drunk by some of the core members of the Hofstad group. By this symbolic action the leader of the Hofstad group wanted to prove that they were 'his sons'. Benschop, 'Chronicle of a Political Murder Foretold'.

example, has advanced a 'Bunch of Guys' thesis. The term was used to describe a group being watched by authorities in Canada, who had placed listening devices in their apartment. They were deemed 'more pathetic than dangerous – unemployed, no girlfriends, living on welfare or thievery, and crammed into an apartment reeking of cigarette smoke'.[87] For Sageman, the ties developed within such groups are often the most important aspect in explaining militancy. Thus he argues that 'in-group love rather than out-group hate seems a better explanation' for the behaviour of the Hamburg-based terrorists.[88] This is very close to Crenshaw's claim that terrorism 'represents the outcome of the internal dynamics of the organization rather than strategic action'.[89] Such arguments, not without insight, are nonetheless excessive. Internal dynamics are important, but not to the exclusion of all else. However, there is undoubtedly a significant role played by the group in the consolidation of loyalty and concern for one another, and, significantly, in cementing a particular worldview. In the case of militant Salafists, this argues that there is a religiously prescribed duty to act in defence of Muslims threatened by the non-Islamic West.

Although conducted on the radical groups of Europe in the 1960s and 1970s, Della Porta's research remains useful in the context of jihadist militants in the current day. She argues that 'the more isolated groups are, the more abstract, ritualistic and inaccessible to factual argument their ideologies become'.[90] This is pertinent, if overly deterministic. Ties to each other replace those to people outside the group. For example Zakariya Essabar and Yasser Boughlal had known one another for more than a year, and despite slightly different religious leanings, were close friends. After Essabar (re)converted, embracing militant Salafism whilst Boughlal did not, their relationship ended. For Essabar, Boughlal was replaced with Atta and the others and the ideologies they collectively held dear.[91] A similar story is that of Aysel Sengün. She was the girlfriend and later wife of Ziad Jarrah, the pilot

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[87] Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, p. 101.   [88] *Ibid*. p. 156.

[89] M. Crenshaw, 'Theories of Terrorism: Instrumental and Organizational Approaches', *Journal of Strategic Studies* 10(4), 1987, p. 19.

[90] Della Porta, 'Introduction: On Individual Motivations in Underground Political Organizations', p. 20.

[91] McDermott, *Perfect Soldiers*, p. 66.

who crashed United Airlines flight 93, intended for the Capitol, in Pennsylvania. Theirs was a relationship that gradually disintegrated as an increasingly militant Jarrah distanced himself from his partner in favour of those with whom he would participate in the attacks. The story of the two relationships, one between partners and another between Jarrah and the Hamburg cell, has been superbly retold by McDermott[92] and also emerged at the trial of Mounir el Motassadeq.[93] Similar stories of increasing loyalty to a small group, and to the message central to the group's identity, can be told of cells in Madrid, Beeston, London, Paris, Rome, Portland, Montreal and numerous other places and contexts. Della Porta offers a description of the process as it affected one young European a generation earlier:

In a spiraling set of interrelationships, as the amount of time a member spent in political activities increased, so did his contacts with political companions. At the same time, the strengthening of friendship ties inside the political environment increased the value attached to political involvement and encouraged people to dedicate more and more time to political activities. In this way, other ties lost their power to exert countervailing effects on the formation of the personality...[C]ommitment among the militants involved a process of isolation from the outside world, and this isolation reinforced loyalty to the new group. Political friends became the most important peer group, capable of influencing any individual choice.[94]

Within such groups an extreme ideology may develop more easily, less hindered by nuances, discrepancies and contradictions that might otherwise call it into question, developing into 'distinctive values, norms, and standards of behaviour'.[95] We have seen what such behaviour and norms are in the case of militant Salafism.

Militant Salafists subscribe to a worldview that sees two dichotomously opposed, mutually hostile entities. As righteous Muslims they are obliged to enter the conflict in the defence of the *ummah*. Such a

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[92] *Ibid.*   [93] Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, p. 156.

[94] D. Della Porta, 'Recruitment Processes in Clandestine Political Organizations: Italian Left-Wing Terrorism', *International Social Movement Research* 1, 1988, p. 163.

[95] M. Crenshaw, 'Decisions to Use Terrorism: Psychological Constraints on Instrumental Reasoning', in B. Klandermans and D. Della Porta (eds.), *Social Movements and Violence: Participation in Underground Organizations*, Greenwich: JAI Press, 1992, p. 31.

view is dependent in part on being able to tap into and consequently adapt the 'deeply sedimented social perspectives'[96] within Muslim communities as to how the world operates and the part Muslims do and should play within it. These elements are transformed by the words and actions of militants, often with the assistance of radical preachers and small cells that serve to confirm the claims of the militant ideology. They help militant Salafists to reconfigure those prevalent narratives and reimagine themselves as united with distant militant co-religionists in a global conflict. However, even with due consideration of the powers of persuasion of Hamza and his ilk and the psychological effects of small clandestine groups, this is insufficient to explain the central paradox of the phenomenon – how it is that men and women who live apparently integrated lives in Western countries come to conceive of themselves as united with distant co-religionists in a battle against their neighbours. Militant preachers and the group are supplemental to, and not replacements for, the shifting forces of an increasingly globalised world. Through witnessing/'experiencing' and amalgamating remote events, militants accord themselves a role within the alleged struggle. Without media and movement as conditions of possibility, this would be a considerably more difficult proposition.

[96] M. Williams, 'Words, Images, Enemies: Securitization and International Politics', *International Studies Quarterly* 47(4), 2003, 527.

Conclusion

The central question in an analysis of militant Salafism, certainly as it manifests itself in the West, is how is it possible that dispersed individuals living very different lives came to conceive of themselves as united in a world of two opposed forces – those of Islam and the West? More precisely such an analysis would focus on the global sociological conditions of possibilities that render militant Salafism in the West a viable proposition for so many individuals. There would likely not be a great deal of difference amongst those writing in the field in defining what militant Salafism is. Where this work departs from many others is in developing an alternative to the individual 'root causes' approaches that predominate in the literature. In doing so it makes use of the idea of the political imaginary in an era of globalised modernity, explaining the conditions of possibility that facilitate its specific forms. Again, the political imaginary is nothing new. As long as there has been political life, the political imaginary has maintained an importance within it. However, it continues to take different forms, influenced although not dictated by those underlying conditions of possibilities. An examination of those possibilities offers insight into the imaginary it facilitates and the political realities that imaginary in turn creates. There is no doubt that the political imaginary plays a crucial role in the life of militant Salafists. The leap from a moderately religious, apolitical young man in Rotterdam to a *mujahid* united in religious battle with people around the globe, is a dramatic one. For such people, whose links to a militant milieu are tangential, a substantial exercise of the political imaginary is required. Indeed that is why so much more attention was paid to the story of Westernised pilot Ziad Jarrah – who seemed for so much of his politically and religiously moderate life to be detached from the issues allegedly inspiring militant Salafism – than those of his co-conspirators who arrived as zealous militants from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in order to join the 2001 attacks on the United States. Long after the

majority have been forgotten, stories such of that of Jarrah will continue to puzzle and interest. In all cases, political identity and relations rest to some degree on the exercise of the political imaginary. What is particularly intriguing, and what makes the approach adopted in this book so appropriate to the subject, is that those who engage in militant Salafism in the West are on the whole those for whom the political imaginary was required to play a particularly strong role.

Crucial to adherents of this particular form of militancy is a particular form of nostalgic politics. This is one that does not rely on memory of a political life that has existed and may continue to do so. Rather it is one that is imagined, constructed and subsequently acted upon by militants. It is a process that does not rest upon memory and recollection but upon the amalgamation of various dispersed events in the construction of new political relations.

All political imaginaries are founded on material factors that encourage, limit and guide them. Whilst the political imaginary cannot be reduced to such underlying factors – it is called the imaginary for a reason – it is shaped by them. There are an almost infinite number of such factors that operate to differing degrees in different combinations in different contexts. As such, theorists offer alternative suggestions as to what dynamics they consider to be of most importance.[1] In the case of militant Salafism there are two conditions of possibility that are paramount – movement and media. There is a fluid, dynamic interplay between these two forces, that combine in often unpredictable ways to give rise to the political imaginary of a Muslim who is part of a global Muslim community threatened and attacked by the West, a state of affairs that necessitates a military response. These and other dynamics flow unpredictably around the world, combining with other forces in ways that may undermine existing politics and provide the prospects for alternatives. It is because of this fluidity and interplay that the separation here of the two forces deemed central to this study should not be seen as indicative of their true relations. Movement impacts media, media impacts movement, different types of media and movement impact one another and all interact with other dynamics that are too numerous for any study to explore. For the benefit of clear presentation, the two

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[1] See for example Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, p. 110, and J. Rosenau, *Turbulence in World Politics*. Princeton University Press, 1990.

are presented as the two prongs of a fork. A more realistic analogy would be of two streams that flow at different rates, depths and volume, and which come into contact with one another in the creation of other streams of a different nature.

Many people may feel horrified by pictures from Fallujah, and opposed the 2001 attack on Afghanistan. Some of these may further believe such events are an aspect of concerted hostility on the part of the West aimed against the Muslim world. However, an additional step is needed to make a militant Salafist. That is for them to locate themselves within that battle, to conceive of themselves not as a concerned observer of world politics, but as playing a direct part in a global clash between two forces, and to be required to respond with violence. Militant Salafists must conceive of themselves as mujahideen. Together, hypermedia and movement allow this to happen.

If this were as far as the theorising had gone, there would be something disconcertingly haphazard about it, as though 'social epistemes, the mental equipment by means of which people reimagine … their collective existence … act as some ethereal Zeitgeist'.[2] There is more to the story than global forces swirling around, offering themselves to people to latch on to. More can be and has been said as to why the appeal of militant Salafism resonates so much more successfully with certain constituents (although even there, it is only a small minority with whom it does). The answer lies at least in part in their ability to tap into the beliefs and perspectives on political and social life that may be found in many Muslim societies. The current political climate that has left Muslims as today's 'suspect community'[3] has made many concerned parties particularly sensitive to anything that hints of homogenising and essentialising. Referring as this book does to a Muslim culture may appear to run the risk of offending such understandable sensitivities, but it should not.

Muslim societies are as diverse as any other, and exceptions to any claims made about them are always going to be readily found. However, as with any other group, the presence of difference does not prevent us from usefully pointing to general commonalities. In the case of Muslim communities there are two aspects of the cultures that are particularly pertinent here, for it is these sedimentary beliefs that

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[2] Ruggie, 'Territoriality and Beyond', p. 151.
[3] P. Hillyard, *Suspect Community*. London: Pluto Press, 1993.

are developed and transformed in the creation of a militant Salafist. These are the notion of the mistreatment of Muslims and the veneration of certain figures. For the majority of Muslims, the former constitutes a sense of grievance at foreign policies unfairly applied, whilst the latter is the stuff of historical tales, significant in a different place at a different time, but of only metaphorical significance today. The trick of militant Salafism is to mine these myths and to breathe modern relevance into them. The notion of Muslim defence of themselves and each other in the face of hostility thus becomes a perpetual battle between the forces of righteous belief and infidelity, and the tales of historical figures become relevant lessons as to how Muslims should behave today. (After all, the battles in which such figures engaged continue unabated in militant politics.)

Radical preachers and groups both play a significant role in the propagation of the message that Muslims are threatened and that an obligation exists to respond with violence. As noted, a great number of militants have interacted with radical preachers such as Abu Hamza, Mohammed Fazazi and Abu Qatada. Those who have not have almost certainly watched and listened to their message, widely available on audio recordings, videos and the Internet. Such preachers have proved tremendously successful in persuading individuals that a war is being waged and that they are an indispensable part of that conflict. Similarly, it is very rare that a militant Salafist did not emerge from a small militant group. Such groups offer further assistance in that process of the development and consolidation of the militant imaginary. As shown in Chapter 6, it is often within small groups, from London to Lisbon and Brussels to Berlin, that such preachers are watched, listened to and discussed. It is within such small, clandestine groups that the alleged horrors visited on Muslims are discussed, evidenced by the images accessed and radical tracts listened to. The group serves as confirmation of this delineation between Muslim and other, isolating its members from wider society, and in doing so encouraging terrorism amongst its members.[4] This is undoubtedly the case with

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[4] This is a characteristic of such groups that is by no means limited to militant Salafist ones. See for example D. Della Porta, 'Political Socialization in Left-Wing Underground Organizations', in D. Della Porta (ed.), *Social Movements and Violence: Participation in Underground Organizations*. Greenwich: JAI Press, 1992.

militant Salafism in the West. Within these groups and with the assistance of radical preachers, media and movement are built upon in the development of militant Salafists.

Terrorism studies, and the study of militant Salafism as a subset of this, have tended to retreat into a world of their own making, a process accelerated by the terrorist attacks on the United States in 2001. This self-imposed separation is particularly troubling, because there is so much that can be gained from some rich and sophisticated theorising and profound insights offered in international politics (as well as sociology, economics, international history, computer science and mathematics through complexity theory etc.).[5] Understanding of militant Salafism, as with terrorism more widely, is dependent in large part on accessing and utilising bodies of research that have much to say about the topic. This work applies some such insights from international sociology, globalisation studies and international politics. Others may have other intellectual preferences.[6] That is to be welcomed. There has certainly not been an excess of strong theoretical insights supported by empirical evidence in this field.

Interest in militant Salafism remains considerable. Consecutive issues of the *New York Review of Books* have contained review essays of books just published on militant Salafism – fifteen books in total (one earned a place in both essays).[7] As the *New York Times* piece cited in the Introduction makes clear,[8] debates on central issues connected to the phenomenon remain fundamentally contested. Academic positions on the topic appear increasingly entrenched as unverifiable defences are offered for the unknowable. Alternatives – theoretically robust and empirically supported – are required both from the perspective of the advancement of knowledge and for the sake of those whose lives are adversely affected by militant Salafism. Three years

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[5] For a superb example, see Cetina, 'Complex Global Microstructures'.

[6] As demonstrated by a recent conference panel in which advocates of various theoretical positions, including critical theory, liberalism, realism and constructivism, explored what each position had to say about terrorism. Revised versions have since been published in Forum: Bridge-building and Terrorism, *International Relations* 23(1).

[7] A. Rashid, 'Jihadi Suicide Bombers: The New Wave', *New York Review of Books*, 12 June 2008, and M. Ruthven, 'The Rise of the Muslim Terrorists', *New York Review of Books*, 29 May 2008.

[8] Sciolino and Schmitt, 'A Not Very Private Feud over Terrorism'.

after the 2001 attacks on the United States, the author of what remains the most authoritative work on the attacks argued in its introduction that 'the killing continues with no good end in sight. The sooner we come to understand what is happening, the sooner we will have a chance to stop it. Until we do understand, we have no chance at all.'[9] It is time to understand.

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[9] McDermott, *Perfect Soldiers*, p. xii.

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